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island. On the other hand, pigs, cattle, horses, and sheep were admittedly of very recent introduction.

Many other things were probably assigned to the first king, among them the origin of the signs on the tablets. Thomson's tradition (215, p. 514) asserts that "Hotu-matua, the first king possessed the knowledge of this written language, and brought with him to the island sixty-seven tablets containing allegories, traditions, genealogical tablets, and proverbs relating to the land from which he had migrated." Routledge (194, p. 279) attributes the knowledge of reading and writing to Hineriru who "wrote rongo-rongo on paper he brought with him." Hotu-matua and Tuu-ko-ihu were, in a sense, culture heroes, and there must have been a general tendency to make them the originators of many inventions and sacred institutions.

Immediately after landing the people started to till the soil, planting the cuttings and tubers brought from Marae-renga. During the first three months, while they waited for the crops to be harvested, "they subsisted entirely upon fish, turtle, and the nuts of a creeping-plant found growing along the ground, which was named moki-oone" (215, p. 527).

THE FIGHT WITH OROI

The next episode in Hotu-matua's legend has been recorded in almost identical terms by three main sources. It may be called the "fight with Oroi and the killing of Oroi." Oroi was Hotu-matua's most bitter enemy: Thomson (215, p. 528) makes him the unsuccessful rival of Hotu-matua's brother (Machaa), and Routledge (194, p. 279) says that he was the killer of Hotu-matua's children in Marae-renga.

Ko Oroi he piko mai i runga i te vaka o Tuu-ko-ihu, i oho mai ai mai hiva mai Marae-renga. He piko mai Oroi i raro i te vaka o Tuu-ko-ihu. He oho mai tau vaka era, he tomo ki uta ki Hanga-o-hio. He oho mai te tangata, he marere. He oho ki uta i te po, i piko mai nei Oroi. He tomo rua ki uta, he noho i uta nei. Ku tomo takoa ana te vaka o Hotu-matua. He tomo ana, he poreko ana ko Tuu-ma-heke te poki, i poreko a Hotu-matua i te kainga nei ko te Pito-o-te-henua. He poreko rua hoki te poki a Tuu-ko-ihu, ariki tamahahine ko Ava-reipua te ariki a Tuu-ko-ihu, o toona vaka. He noho te tangata. He oho atu Tuu-ko-ihu, he haka-hiti i te ata o te ariki o Tuu-ma-heke. He oho a Tuu-ko-ihu ki te pito nanangi o te ariki o Tuu-ma-heke. He oti te nanangi e Tuu-ko-ihu, he hoki, he nanangi i te pito o taana ariki tamahahine ko Ava-reipua.

Oroi concealed himself in the boat of Tuu-ko-ihu,[8] when he came from abroad from Marae-renga. Oroi was hidden in the interior of the boat of Tuu-ko-ihu. This boat arrived, it landed at Hanga-o-hio. The people came [ashore]. they scattered. Oroi went ashore at night, hiding. He also landed on the shore, he stayed ashore. The canoe of Hotu-matua had landed also. When he landed, the child Tuu-ma-heke was born to Hotu-matua in the land [called] the Navel-of-the-land. A child was also born to Tuu-ko-ihu, the chiefess Ava-reipua of the chief Tuu-ko-ihu, on his canoe. The people settled down. Tuu-ko-ihu went, he made magic for the chief Tuu-ma-heke. Tuu-ko-ihu came to bite the navel cord of the chief Tuu-ma-heke. Tuu-ko-ihu finished the cutting, he returned, he bit the navel cord of his chiefess Ava-reipua.

[8] According to Thomson, the boat of Hotu-matua.

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girls fell in love with him and he slept with them. In the morning Paterangi got up and left the house, then nobody saw that he had an ugly face. He used to return at night, but he always left in the morning and stayed in his house the entire day. 539

The following month, the girls said, "When Paterangi Heikena comes and lies down asleep, let us conceal his breechcloth so that he will not be in such a hurry to leave in the morning. Let us hide his breechcloth." At night, Paterangi came and sang with his beautiful voice the song called *ate-atua* or *koro-kaha-opo*. Then he closed his eyes and fell asleep. A girl removed his breechcloth and hid it. At dawn Paterangi searched for it, but could not find it. When day came, the girls saw his ugly face. They said, "Oh, girls, this man we fell in love with is not handsome." Paterangi was ashamed that the girls had seen his ugly face. The girls spat at the ugly Paterangi Heikena though his voice was wonderful.

The Good Doctor

In a battle a man had been wounded. After one month his intestines, which had been cut, had not healed. An expert doctor heard about this. He pulled out the sinews of a rat's tail. He went to the patient's bedside and noticed that the sweet potatoes he had eaten could not reach his anus. So he cut and threw away the portion of the intestines which were in bad condition. He put the tail of the rat in the place where the pieces had been removed. The man recovered and was healthy again.

Tupeti, the Successful Farmer

There was a girl called Vai-ira-ranga-a-tino-ngerengere, famous for her beauty. She lived near Ahaha-o-uta. She went to a feast (*koro*) at Ori where she saw a plantation of sugar cane. She asked, "To whom does this sugar cane belong?" Another woman said, "To Tupeti." She then asked, "To whom do these sweet potatoes belong?" "To Tupeti." "To whom do these yams belong?" "To Tupeti." "To whom do these banana trees belong?" "To Tupeti." "To whom do these chickens belong?" "To Tupeti." "To whom does this house belong?" "To Tupeti."

The girl fell immediately in love with this man though he was ugly. She married him on account of all this food and all the good things that he had.

The Battle of the Islands

The four islands, Marotiri, Motu-nui, Motu-iti and Motu-kaokao, were all under the village of Orongo. Motu-nui, Motu-iti and Motu-kaokao had a fight with Marotiri and forced it to retreat. That was a hard fight and Marotiri got so tired that it ran away and established itself off Pui, where it remained alone. The three other islands abandoned the pursuit and returned where they are now.

TABLETS

RONGORONGO MEN

The famous wooden tablets of Easter Island, covered with hieroglyphs, are known as *kohau rongorongo*. This has been erroneously translated as "talking" or "intelligent wood", after the original interpretation by Bishop Tepano Jaussen who divided the word *kohau* into two elements (*ko hau*) and interpreted them thus: "It is a *hau* (hibiscus wood) intelligent." The Bishop ignored the fact that *kohau* is a single word meaning stick, staff, the stem of a plant, or the shaft of a lance. The word *rongorongo* is a complement (*te kohau rongorongo*, the stick of the *rongorongo* men), as evidenced 196 212

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by the use of other substantives to indicate the nature of a particular tablet (*kohau o te ranga, kohau o te pure*).

As already mentioned (p. 137), the chants associated with the tablets were recited by learned men or bards called *tangata rongorongo*. Reading of the tablets or chanting from them was taught in special huts, comparable to the schools of learning (*whare wananga*) of the Maori. At Te Hare-titaha in Anakena I was shown stone curbs which were supposed to be remains of the most famous school for *rongorongo* men. There were similar houses in other districts. The atmosphere and the methods in these houses of learning were described by some informants on the authority of old men now dead. Unfortunately these traditions are colored by details of the missionary school system:

> The school houses were open sheds with thatched roofs. In the morning the children waited outside the house until they were told by the teacher to enter. To the teacher's salute of *mairs* they answered *kokoea*. Each student knelt before a flat stone (*maea rongo*), which served as a writing desk. The assistant instructor (*te pahu*) counted the children to find out whether any were missing. The teacher started the lesson by reciting a prayer from a tablet. Then the children were taught to make string figures, each of which was associated with a chant that they must memorize. There were chants for love, for the dead, for saving people from dying, for addressing noblemen, and for the multiplication of birds and fish.
>
> Banana leaves were used as copy books and on them the pupils practiced the engraving of signs with a sharp bone from the frigate bird (*makohe*). Te Haha said the copy books were sheaths from the banana trunk (194, p. 214).
>
> According to Routledge, Te Haha was taught by King Nga-ara, but Charli Teao, the nephew of Te Haha, told me that his uncle had been trained by Taki, another uncle of Charli. Taki had been taught by Ngangiriva. Te Haha described King Nga-ara as "holding a tablet in one hand and swaying from side to side as he recited. Besides giving instruction, he inspected the candidates prepared by other professors, who were generally their own sons; he looked at their *kohau* and made them read, on which he either passed them, clapping if they did well, or turned them back. Their sponsors were made personally responsible. If the pupils acquitted themselves creditably, presents of *kohau* were made to the teachers; if the youth failed, the tablets of the instructor were taken away" (194, p. 245).

Besides the annual gathering and chanting by *rongorongo* men at Orongo during the feast of the bird-man, these learned bards met once a year at Anakena to chant for the king. People came from all over the island to hear them "read" from the tablets. This public "reading" must be considered as a general contest between *rongorongo* men and a test of the ability of each. Visitors arrived with *huhu* (sticks with feathers) to which turmeric was tied, as a courtesy to the king. The food to be consumed during the feast was supplied by the king, who was aided by people of neighboring districts. Te Haha described to Routledge (194, pp. 245-246) one such gathering, which he attended in his youth:

> Both King Nga-ara and his son, Kaimako . . . sat on seats made of tablets, and each had a tablet in his hand; they wore feather hats, as did all the professors. The

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171 533 festivals. They also attended feasts organized by the king or by chiefs to recite genealogies and chants in praise of nobility. They knew and transmitted to their pupils both sacred and profane lore (28, pp. 304-305).

In the Tuamotus the word *rongo* is applied to formal chants about the exploits or feats of a hero, recited by the *tahunga one*. *Rongo* is also the name of a "mourning chant for a deceased hero."

Reciters and chanters are familiar elements in the general pattern of Polynesian culture, but it is significant that it is only in the eastern part of Polynesia that we find the word *rongorongo* associated with a special class of bards.

171 ●212 533 The tablets of the Easter Island *rongorongo* were often sticks covered with symbols. In this connection it is important to mention that the *rongorongo* of Mangareva beat the measure with staffs (*kohau*) when chanting. In the Marquesas the ceremonial symbol of the *tuhuna o'ono* was a bundle of three *fau* stakes wrapped in cloth (104, p. 230). Maori orators always held clubs (*taiaha*) in their hands, without which they could not deliver a speech.

TABLETS

114 212 The wooden tablets, covered with rows of small figures, are a puzzle to science and constitute the most complicated problem of Easter Island culture. Though many hypotheses have been, or may be, presented to explain their significance, it is probable that the mystery will never be solved, for data are few.

[322] The so-called hieroglyphs or glyphs of the Easter Island script were incised with shark teeth or sharp obsidian flakes on boards, on sticks, and sometimes on wooden images or ornaments. In the Easter Island collection of Bishop Museum there are small obsidian points which may well have been used for this purpose.

Twenty tablets or fragments of tablets, scattered throughout institutions of the world, have been preserved and a corpus of all the known tablets is being prepared by Dr. Alan S. C. Ross.

The most important collection of all Easter Island tablets is preserved in the Museum de la Congrégation des Sacrés Coeurs de Picpus in Braine-le-Comte (Belgium). The four tablets kept there were collected by the first missionaries to Easter Island and were given to Bishop Tepano Jaussen of Tahiti. The largest one, called Tahua or the "Oar" is 90 cm. long and 14 cm. wide and has 1,547 signs. Another, called Aruku-kurenga, is 41 cm. long and 18.5 cm. wide. A third, called Mamari, is 21 cm. by 30 cm. In the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, there are two tablets, only one of which is authentic. The other, 25.5 cm. long and 5.2 cm. wide, is probably a fake. (See 97, p. 101, fig. 1, pl. 10.) The little tablet in the British Museum, 21 cm. long and 7.3 cm. wide (58), is not ancient. The tablet made of apple-tree wood in the Lateran Museum, Rome (6442), is a crude fake. Two tablets in the Museum of Santiago de Chile were taken by the *O'Higgins* in 1870; one of these is 35 cm. long and 12 cm. wide, the other is 45 cm. long and 11.5 cm. wide. Two tablets purchased by Thomson in 1886 are in the National Museum, Washington. One tablet is preserved in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin. There are two tablets in the Museum of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad. One of these,

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given by Jaussen in 1871 to the Russian ship *Vitiaz*, is 62 cm. long and 14 cm. wide and has 11 rows of signs on each face; the other, purchased by N. N. Miklukho-Maklay during the same cruise, is 42 cm. long and 9 cm. wide and has 9 rows of signs on each face (179, p. 425). In Bishop Museum there are two tablets with the signs partly destroyed and a fragment of a tablet (445) collected by Lt. Symonds of the U.S.S. *Mohican*. One tablet is in the collection of Stephen Chauvet, Paris. The tablet called Keiti belonged to the collection of Bishop Tepano Jaussen. It was given to the library of the University of Louvain which burned in 1914. Fortunately photographs and a rubbing of this tablet were preserved and published by Lavachery (138). Another tablet was given by French missionaries to the Chilean ship *O'Higgins* but it never reached France, its destination. The Musée de l'homme in Paris has casts of most of the tablets in existence.

Only one of the sticks covered with tablet signs, mentioned by Eyraud (81, vol. 38, p. 71), has been preserved. It was given to officers of the *O'Higgins* in 1870 by Dutroux-Bornier, who thought that it was a weapon belonging to a king (176, p. 676). The stick is 1.25 meters long and 6 cm. thick. It is round and tapers toward one end. There are 13 rows of figures with an average of 115 signs each and an additional row at the thick end. A pectoral (*rei-miro*) in the British Museum has a row of signs carved on it (57) and an image of a bird-man in the American Museum is decorated with a few tablet figures. Thomson (215, p. 535) claims to have brought back a "calabash covered with hieroglyphics similar to those found on the incised tablets," but this specimen disappeared from the Easter Island collection in the National Museum, Washington.

A certain importance has been attributed to the wood of the tablets as a result of the theory that Easter Island tablets may have been imported into the island by the first immigrants. The analyses show that the following woods were used for the tablets: Lauraceae, Myrtaceae, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Thespesia populnea*, *Podocarpus latifolia*, *Pyrus malus* (131, p. 70). The beautiful tablet called the "Oar", whose authenticity has never been questioned, was engraved on a European oar of *Fraxinus excelsior*. Thus it must date from the end of the eighteenth century or the first half of the nineteenth century A. D. This particular tablet, one of the largest and purest in style, was collected by the French missionaries about 1867 or 1869, at a time when natives paid little attention to tablets. The wooden tablets could not have been kept for centuries in rain-drenched, thatched huts, or in caves. How then could these tablets have been saved during thousands of years of migration and war and come to us in the form of a modern European oar?

The signs are incised on both faces of a tablet. Between each row of signs is a low ridge, produced by slightly sunken channels or flutes along which the signs have been engraved. On the tablet called Aruku-kurenga, of which the Bishop Museum has a cast, these channels are 1.5 cm. wide. The channels were produced by longitudinally adzing the piece of wood. The carver must have held the plank in a vertical position with the left hand and formed the plane surface by striking regular blows with his adz. The signs are outlined by angular grooves of varying depth. The skill displayed by the artist is masterly; all the signs are incised with a freedom, a keen appreciation of proportion, and a vigor that only an expert artist could accomplish. There

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212 is a good sense of movement and a harmonious combination of conventionalised and naturalistic elements.

The signs are made in boustrophedon arrangement, that is every other line of figures is upside down so that the sequence is continuous. Every line is read from left to right (115, p. 252; 194, p. 242) and the tablet must be turned at the end of each line or else half the lines must be read upside down. The heads of the animals generally face toward the right.

There is great need of a list of all the signs used on the tablets. I have attempted to classify the 1,000 signs which occur on the tablet Aruku-kurenga. Jaussen (115, pp. 259-270) made a general list of the signs of the so-called Easter Island script, but his list is not valuable because it is based on only five tablets, the signs are poorly copied and are repeated, and the classification is based on assumed meaning rather than on form of drawing. A study of many tablets, photographs, and casts shows that, though there are many variations and combinations of signs, the basic figures are few. Apparently the artist paid little attention to uniformity. The principal signs are of men, birds, bird-men, double-headed birds, parts of the body (vulva, hands, and feet), fish turtles, crabs, octopuses, centipedes, plants of various descriptions, implements, weapons, ornaments, ships, celestial bodies, geometrical motifs like series of triangles, lozenges, perpendicular sticks, series of circles, and so forth. These signs are sometimes combined to form strange groups. Some of the associations are casual and must be regarded as a sort of cursive writing, but other combinations may have a definite significance.

Recent informants say that there were several kinds of tablets, each named after its subject. Tablets recording feasts were *tau*; those for the dead, *kohau-o-te-tangata-mate*; those for wars, *kohau-o-te-ranga* (literally, sticks-of-the-expulsions); those for prayers, *kohau-kiri-tuku-ki-te-atua-kia-Rarai-Hova* (sticks-for-the-invocations-to-the-god-Rarai-Hova). In the native version of the legend of Hotu-matua, the first king is said to have founded schools in which pupils were taught to make the various kinds of tablets.

My informant was probably mistaken when he mentioned the *kohau-o-te-ranga* as a special category of tablets. Routledge (194, p. 249) speaks of *kohau-o-te-ranga* as the name of a single tablet, "reported to have been brought by the first immigrants; it had the notable property of securing victory to its holders, in such a manner that they were able to get hold of the enemy for the *ranga* that is, as captives or slaves for manual labour." This tablet belonged to Nga-ara, but was stolen by a man called Kaara, who gave it to an expert chanter, Arohio. The son of Arohio traded it to the French missionaries and it may be one of the tablets at Braine-le-Comte. There were undoubtedly other similar lists of wars.

The *tau* was an inferior writing to record the deeds of a man for whom a *hare* or feast was given. On this occasion a tablet was incised telling "how

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many men he had killed in war, how many chickens he had stolen." A man named Kapiera told Routledge (194, pp. 251-252) that the earliest *tau* was made by an ancestor of Hotu-matua, the first king of the island. A large tablet contained a list of the lesser tablets "giving merely the name of each hero and the year of his *koro*." The names were enumerated and followed with figures corresponding to the year when the *koro* was celebrated. The numbers went to ten, then began again. "If there were two *koro* in a year, they came under the same numeral." 212

There was also a tablet for *ika* (murdered men). It was known to only one person, "who taught it to a pupil, and the two divided the island between them, the master taking the west and the north coast to Anakena and the pupil the remainder. A connected, or possibly the same tablet, was made at the instance of the relatives of the victim and helped to secure vengeance" (194, p. 248).

Some tablets dealt with ceremonies, and others were part of ceremonies themselves. They were in evidence at *koro*, where Nga-ara and the professors used to "pray for the father" and where a woman went onto the roof of the house holding the "kohau-o-te-pure" (prayer tablet). "In another case, a woman who wished to honour her father-in-law, and at the same time secure fertility, set up a pole round which she walked holding a child and a tablet, given her by Nga-ara while he and other *rongorongo* men who brought their *kohau* at his order stood by and sang" (194, p. 249). Thirteen subjects were dealt with in the tablets. No mention was made either to Routledge or me of genealogies, lists of *ariki*, or the wanderings of the people. [842]

The tablets were said to be tapu and were handled only by the *rongorongo* men and their servants. When kept in the hut they were wrapped in mats and hung from the roof. During war they were regarded by the victorious party as valuable spoils. [784]

Tablets are first mentioned in 1864 by Eyraud (81, vol. 38, p. 71) who says they were found in almost every house although the natives did not understand their meaning and showed little respect for them. Several years later Zumbohm (230, vol. 6, p. 232) collected some tablets and attempted unsuccessfully to learn the meaning of the incised signs. He gathered the most learned natives who "seemed pleased" to see the tablet and told him its name. Then some started to read the page by "chanting." But others disagreed on the chant and the discouraged missionary gave up his inquiry. Roussel (190, p. 464) scarcely mentions the tablets and assumes that the characters never had a meaning. "The few natives who pretended to know them, recited when tested only ridiculous and meaningless tales." It is worth stressing that Roussel speaks of the tablets in connection with the native chants. 212 114

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Palmer (168, p. 290) writes that a member of the Chilean expedition to Easter Island was told by one of the Padres "that when one of the tablets was found, a lad who was present began to chant its contents, when an old man present stopped him forthwith. Of course the reason for this procedure was given, that the figure-writing had reference to some religious ceremony, of which, as the older convert had abjured the practices, the recital was not judged by him prudent, nor politic to be repeated."

A thorough attempt was made by Bishop Tepano Jaussen of Tahiti, with the help of Metoro Tauara, an Easter Islander working on Brander's plantation in Tahiti, to decipher the five tablets given to him by the missionaries of Easter Island. Metoro Tauara was said to have studied the art of chanting from tablets under three teachers—Ngahu, Rei-miro and Paovaa. Jaussen (115, p. 252) describes the first session with Metoro in the following terms:

> The solemn moment had arrived. I put one of my tablets in the hands of Metoro. He turned it, turned it again, looking for the beginning of the text, and then he started to chant. He chanted the lowest line, from left to right. Arrived at the end, he chanted the nearest line above, from right to left, the third from left to right, the fourth from right to left, like the plowing of oxen. When he arrived at the top line, he passed from the recto to the nearest line of the verso and descended, line after line, like oxen plowing both sides of a hill, starting on the lower side and ending at the bottom on the opposite side. The reader can turn the tablet after each line if he does not want to read the signs upside down. . . .
>
> My interpreter told me that they used to sit in a circle and chant, as if carrying on a ceremony. Besides the word giving the proper meaning of the sign, the chant includes groups of other words added by the fancy of the artists. The learning of these required more work than that of the simple significance of the sign.
>
> To write these signs was very simple, but to learn and chant the rhapsodies of all the tablets was the difficult task. Thus Metoro conceived it. He never tried to teach a sign directly without the chant. When Roussel called the people to read the tablets, each of the pupils whose teachers were dead must have shivered at the thought of finding a tablet which he would not be able to chant. That is why no one dared to present himself. . . . Reading the tablets called Miro, Metoro did not pass to the character opposite the last chanted sign at the end of the recto, but descended diagonally to the bottom of the verso as if he were reading a new tablet. It was the beginning of another subject.

The texts of the purported chants recited by Metoro are preserved in the Museum at Papeete (Tahiti) and copies are in the convent of the Sacred Heart in Braine-le-Comte. A few lines of the text, corresponding to the beginning of the tablet called Aruku-kurenga, were published by C. de Harlez (105) with his translation which does not make sense. A tentative translation of the beginning of the same text is given by Ahnne (2, p. 190) but it is over imaginative. By comparing the text with the tablet, I discovered that most of the sentences chanted were merely explanatory. For instance, about the image of a bird, Metoro would say, "the bird is flying" or "the bird is resting"; about the image of a headdress, "to the headdress." Thus the long text is simply a descriptive catalog. It is rather surprising that Metoro

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chanted these simple explanatory sentences, since they were improvised by him. However, we must remember that chanting is easy, and Metoro knew that chanting was always associated with the tablets. To illustrate Metoro's method, I shall give part of the 21st row of signs in the tablet Aruku-kurenga with the native text and its translation (fig. 56).

FIGURE 56.—Part of row 21 on tablet Aruku-kurenga.

1. Kua huki: He is pierced.
2. Ko te ariki: It is the king.
3. Tere ki te vai: He went to the water.
4. E tangata moe ra ki te huaga e: The man is sleeping against blossoming fruit.
5. Kua tuu ko te toga: The posts are set up.
6. Ma to tapa mea kua haga: The red yam is growing.
7. Kua haati ia te kava: The kava plant is broken.
8. Ma te tapa mea kua haga: The red yam growing.
9. Kua haati ia te kava: The kava plant is broken.
10. E tangata rua kua oho, kua hua: Two men went, it was blossoming.
11. Ma to ihe: Like the needlefish.
12. E i raa: And the sun.
13. E i te haga (probably huaga) era: It is blossoming.
14. Ko te rei: It is a pectoral (rei-miro).
15. Kua oho ki te henua: He came to the land.
16. Kua tupu ia mua i te aro: It has grown in front of him.
17. E tangata oho era: The man left.
18. Ki to kava e: To your kava plant.
19. Ka oho te rei: Here comes the pectoral (rei-miro).
20. Tangata itiiti: Very little man.
21. Ma to kava: Like your kava plant.

Comparison of the fragmentary sentences with the symbols makes it plain that they are hasty explanations of the drawings. The explanation becomes more obscure when the symbol is conventionalized and therefore less recognizable. Metoro's interpretation is nevertheless useful for it gives the meaning of designs, the significance of which might otherwise be a puzzle.

At about the time of Jaussen, Croft (56, p. 319) who also lived at Papeete, tried to get the Easter Island natives to translate the tablets. He gave up the attempt after one native had read the same tablet three different ways on three successive Sundays. This action is typical of many Europeans who tried to

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translate the tablets. They tackled the problem with the preconceived idea that the signs formed a script, and they angrily dismissed informants who were unable to prove that they were actually reading.

Pinart (178, p. 239) says, probably falsely, that at his time the tablets were used to roll string for fishlines and nets. Geiseler (87, pp. 23-24) obtained only general information about the tablets and that probably from Salmon to whom he had entrusted the study. He says: " . . . wooden tablets with signs for genealogies" were still in the possession of a chief named Hangeto. "This writing was known only by the former kings and chiefs . . . The script was used for two purposes: to send short notices to chiefs of other villages about important events which they did not want to entrust to oral messages, and in the form of tablets, to record genealogies."

Four years later (1886), Thomson (215, pp. 513-526) made a serious attempt to obtain from the natives a clue to the mystery of the tablets. An old man named Ure-vaeiko, who professed to have been under instruction in the art of hieroglyphic reading at the time of the Peruvian raid, claimed to understand most of the characters. Unfortunately he was very pious and "declined to furnish any information, on the ground that it had been forbidden by the priests." Finally he was prevailed upon to read from photographs of the tablets owned by Jaussen. He recited legends fluently "though it became evident that he was not actually reading the characters. It was noticed that the shifting of position did not accord with the number of symbols on the lines, and afterwards when the photograph of another tablet was substituted, the same story was continued without the change being discovered . . . . He explained at great length that the actual value and significance of the symbols had been forgotten, but the tablets were recognized by unmistakable features and the interpretation of them was beyond question."

Routledge (194, pp. 250-251) knew an old man on Easter Island named Tomenika who was said to have been acquainted with an inferior kind of *rongorongo* known as the *tau*. Her visits to this old man were limited, however, by the fact that he was old and leprous. At one interview Tomenika was given a pencil and sheet of paper on which he drew "three vertical lines first of noughts then of ticks." He gave a name to each line and proceeded to recite. "He obviously used the marks simply to keep count of the different phrases." On another occasion he designed rows of glyphs and recited as he had done before, "the signs taking the place of ticks; anything from three or four to ten words were said to each sign. If he made a variation when asked to repeat, it was transporting the order of two phrases; evidently the signs themselves were not to him, now at any rate, connected with particular words."

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Little if any credence can be attached to present-day information about the significance of the tablets. However, Charli Teao, nephew of Te Haha,

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formulated a theory which expresses ideas that could neither have been invented in modern times nor transmitted by European contacts. Charli Teao was convinced that each sign was connected with a special song of magical virtue. Thus, a person who wanted to impose his will on another had to take a tablet, look at a sign, and chant the appropriate formula. The combined power of the charm and of the drawing might even cause death. The tablet signs (*rona*) had the same mana as identical signs engraved on skulls or rocks. They could make people successful in any activity symbolized by a design (fishing, dancing). Modern natives have a superstitious fear of the tablets. I was told that three years ago a man called Beriberi found a fragment of tablet. Soon after several members of his family died; believing them bewitched by the tablet, he burned it.

Teao pretended that his uncle had taught him the symbolic value of certain signs. For instance, two birds lined together meant friendship, an octopus was a charm to cause death, and so on. For several reasons, I strongly distrust his interpretation, though perhaps he was right when he asserted that many signs represented gods. One of the most frequently repeated tablet signs shows the god Makemake.

The various attempts to decipher the tablets establish only one fact: the tablets were never read, but were used during chanting. Even now the natives pretend to know tablet chants. Had early European inquiries conceived the tablets as something other than an actual script they might have solved the problem of the Easter Island tablets with a few questions.

It is highly significant that all natives who were asked to interpret an individual sign explained what it represented and never gave it a phonetic value. Even if we assume that all the experts who were interrogated were only partially initiated into the science of writing, it is strange that no one tried to spell the signs. With only a glance at the tablet they started to chant. Even a little schooling would have taught them enough to spell a few letters or a few syllables if the signs had some phonetic value. Further evidence will show that the Easter Island symbols were not a script.

Many interpretations of the tablets have been given by scholars or amateurs who tried to solve the problem without the help of natives. A detailed review of the opinions formulated by these investigators is beyond the scope of this book, the more so since they have been summarized by Lehmann (139, pp. 261-264) and by Gusinde (93, pp. 333-337). On the other hand, it is advisable to refute a few errors which have become almost traditional.

Many interpreters regard the tablets as genealogical tables (Meinicke, 152, vol. 2, p. 234; Geiseler, 87, p. 27; Thomson, 215, p. 517; Meyer, 159; Gusinde, 93, p. 336; Haberlandt, 97, pp. 97-100). This is purely hypothetical and unsupported by tradition or native statement. No Polynesian people has lists of ancestors which require 1,600 signs to record. It may be argued that several descent lines are included in one tablet or that information

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as to the sex, the time of birth, and the deeds of the person involved might have been committed to the signs. However, there is no indication that some figures had mnemonic value and others a symbolic meaning. If lines of ancestors were indicated by the rows of signs, we might expect the repetition of certain groups of symbols corresponding to the name of an ancestor, but repetition is exceptional. There are no signs, no divisions, no stop marks which would facilitate the recitation of genealogies.

To substantiate by direct evidence the genealogical interpretations of the tablets, Geiseler (87, p. 27) gives to the sign representing Makemake the symbolic meaning of "birth", and to the sign of the vulva the meaning of "legitimate marriage." These translations are obviously mere guesses. Further, Geiseler makes the absolutely false statement that the two signs are generally combined. Thomson (215, p. 517) adopts Geiseler's views without giving new evidence. Haberlandt (97, p. 100) concludes that the tablets are genealogical lists, although he is well aware that the "signs are too variegated and too intricate" for such a record.

Of the tablet chants recited for Thomson one was a creation chant explaining the formation of nature after the pattern of a human genealogy (p. 320)—a literary theme dear to the natives of eastern Polynesia. If the tablets were accessories to chants, they must have been associated with genealogies, for lists of divine and human ancestors were chanted at the feasts. But association does not prove that the tablets were devices for recording genealogies. The form of the Polynesian genealogies excludes entirely the use of geometrical and naturalistic figures merely to count people.

In spite of statements to the contrary (139, p. 263), there is neither a single rock nor a single stone statue on which inscriptions have been carved. Isolated figures identical or similar to those of the tablets are carved on rocks and on the walls of caves, are painted on stone slabs, or engraved on skulls. But they do not form an inscription. This absence of inscriptions on an island where rock carvings abound is significant; one may well wonder why people who were so prone to trace designs on either hard or soft rocks have never immortalized a name or an event with an inscription, if they had a knowledge of script. The symbols which appear on tablets and elsewhere are: the design of the vulva; *rei-miro* (pectorals); figures of birds (sooty terns and frigate birds), sometimes with a double head; the bird-man; the *ao* (dance paddle), though designs of *ao* are rare and indistinct on the tablets; fish; and rarely men (two petroglyphs near Rano-raraku recorded by Lavachery, and design in the interior of a cave on the island of Motu-nui). The resemblance between the style of the tablet signs and that of the petroglyphs is striking.

Many authors (81, vol. 38, p. 71; 215, p. 517) have seen among the naturalistic symbols on the tablets some forms, unknown on Easter Island, which indicate the locality whence the first settlers came. Thus Hevesy has interpreted what is probably a pelican with a long curved beak as an elephant and the bird-man as a monkey. The signatures of the chiefs to the deed of possession, drawn up when the Spaniards annexed the island in 1770, have been used as evidence of the existence of script on Easter Island. However, with the exception of a bird figure, these signatures are composed of meaningless scrawls not connected with the tablets. The treaty of Waitanga, signed by Maori chiefs, has tattooing marks and other designs in lieu of signatures.

EASTER ISLAND SCRIPT

Thus far no methodical analysis has been made of the signs on the tablets. Such a study is a slow and complicated task because of the abundance of signs, the innumerable variants of each sign, and the many combinations of signs. It is necessary to determine how many times each sign is repeated on a tablet and how often it occurs in each row. Contiguous signs and sequences must likewise be recorded. If the signs are a form of writing and correspond to

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words or syllables, groups or sequences of them will be repeated many times, especially for a Polynesian language. I have been able to analyze only a few tablets, devoting most of my time to the long tablets called Aruku-kurenga and the Oar. A cursory examination of the three tablets preserved in the Museum of Santiago de Chile convinced me that the results would have been the same. I wish that investigators who enjoy greater leisure than I would apply my method to other tablets. It is the only way to establish the true nature of this writing. Any other method results in mere speculations, without scientific value.

The first step in analysis is to find the limits of each individual sign. The figures are either isolated or linked to the contiguous ones. Though sometimes loose, these connections seem to be intentional. I am strongly inclined to believe that these compound signs have no definite meaning of their own independent of the elements which compose them and that they are the conventional products of a sort of "cursive writing." On the tablet Aruku-kurenga and on the Oar there are several groups of signs which are identical. The symbols which compose them are similar but in some groups they have been joined together; in others they are disconnected. Apparently the connections between the signs had no significance.

However, there are some combinations which are so close that they actually form a new and special sign (fig. 57). For instance, a sign becomes the head of a human body or combines with another to form a fantastic being. But even when signs are fused together, it is possible that each retains independent value.

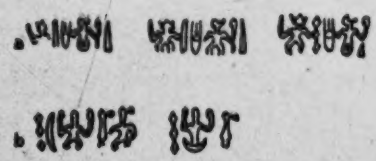

FIGURE 57.—Sequences of identical signs in row 1 of tablet Aruku-kurenga.

The second step in analyzing the tablets is to determine whether variants of a sign have a particular meaning. The naturalistic symbols representing human beings or animals are seldom twice identical. Sometimes the variations are insignificant, sometimes more important, but they rarely suggest definite intention. It is inconceivable that a particular significance would be given to the presence or absence of an arm or a leg, the position of the head, or the form of a hand. If some of these variants recurred consistently they might indicate independent symbols, but they do not. In table 5, I have listed the signs used in the tablet called Aruku-kurenga, giving each sign and all its

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variants. Many differences in the carving of the signs have resulted from lack of space or the nature of the contiguous sign.

On the tablet Aruku-kurenga identical sequences of signs are rare. In row I, group *a* is repeated five times, group *b* twice (fig. 57). The sequences are not always identical. In the last *a* group the second sign is a bird, whereas in the preceding groups it is a stick. In the second *b* group, the crescent has been shifted from a vertical to a horizontal position replacing the feet of the contiguous figure; the last sign is lacking.

In row VI a sequence of four signs is repeated three times. Here again the similarity between the groups is not perfect. The second sign in the first group has a conventionalized head of a man, which in the other two groups is replaced by a bird (the tern). As these sequences occur in the same line, they do not give complete evidence that they express the repetition of the same idea. The artist may well have repeated a sequence to fill the line, or for a simple decorative or psychological reason. More puzzling is the repetition of sequences in different rows. A group of 12 signs in row IX reappears in almost identical form on the other side of the tablet in row XIII. A group of four signs occurs twice in row XV and twice in row XVII.

On the large tablet called the Oar, groups of signs are more frequently repeated. One group of three signs is repeated six times in the same row. Eight repetitions of the same sequence of signs almost fills another line. The groups are not identical, but the variations affect only two or three signs; the others remain the same and keep the same order.

Repetition of the same groups of signs would be of the utmost importance if they were more frequent. The few repetitions I cite here occur on two large tablets of about 1,000 and 1,500 signs respectively, and are not conclusive evidence of the existence of a definite system of transcription. Identical sequences in the same line may have been more or less automatic, for the artist may have repeated his grouped signs until he no longer had them in mind. This explanation is hardly acceptable when the repetitions are far apart, but it is not known whether the artist copied some model or whether certain associations of signs were imposed by tradition. If the tablet reproduced a chant, there would have been more repetition at definite intervals. Some signs may have been associated because of their symbolic meaning and would thus have a definite significance. Groups of signs show that the variants had no particular value. A sign could be replaced by another sign, the outline of which was only slightly similar. For instance, one bird might be replaced by another kind of bird, a personage by a personage of more conventionalized form.

In counting the signs of tablet Aruku-kurenga I considered the groups as one sign in order to avoid confusion, though I am well aware that most of the compound signs should be broken up into their component elements. The total number of signs thus counted is 960, of which 95 are primary signs, a figure which corresponds more or less to the total number of symbols used by the Easter Island *rongorongo*. In the other tablets I found only four or five signs which did not appear on the tablet Aruku-kurenga. The listing of the primary signs is difficult. Many signs can be considered either unique or simple variations of other signs. For the sake of clarity, I have considered compounds as new signs whenever the two elements were closely fused. Many signs have been considered primary symbols, though they may be only variants of others which are poorly carved or distorted by lack of space. Allowing a margin for this unnecessary enlargement of the list, we may estimate the number of symbols used by the tablet carvers at about 100.

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The figure most frequently repeated on the tablet is that of the tern (*manu-tara*). In the tablet Aruku-kurenga it appears 149 times, including both naturalistic and conventionalized representations of the bird and innumerable variants of the bird-man motif, in which the head of the *manu-tara* surmounts a more or less human body. Logically the *manu-tara* symbol includes the design of the bird-man in a sitting posture (fig. 57, *a*), but, as the outline of this figure is constant throughout the tablet, it may be regarded as an independent symbol. The above symbol occurs 34 times on the tablet Aruku-kurenga which brings the total number of bird-men to 183. In other words, a fifth of the tablet is covered with this one symbol, which is that of the most important god of Easter Island.

The second most common sign is that of a man whose head is conventionalized in the shape of a lozenge. It is repeated 94 times on the Aruku-kurenga tablet. The same head, attached to the body of a turtle, has been figured 7 times. The outline of a frigate bird has been carved 32 times. That of another bird with a long beak, a species of pelican, 10 times. I counted 20 fish among the symbols.

Bird-men and human personages constitute about a third of the total number of signs. There is no evidence that these personages have special significance each time they appear. This leaves about 600 signs, including 90 different symbols. There remains a narrow range of repetition for each symbol. Of the more or less geometrical symbols, the most frequent is the representation of the feather streamer (*maro*) which occurs 41 times and is generally connected with one of the two contiguous symbols. There are 20 different symbols which occur only once.

The tablet called the Oar has about 1,500 signs. On it the *manu-tara* or the personage with a *manu-tara* head is repeated 142 times, the frigate bird 80, and the pelican 41 times. Birds represent a little less than a fifth of the total number of signs. One row of the Oar tablet, in which there are 80 signs, repeats the frigate bird 17 times and the *manu-tara* 15 times. Thus, more than a third of the tablet is composed of two bird signs. These bird signs are not grouped, and cannot be considered as a part of identical words.

If this script were phonetic or syllabic there would be constant repetitions of groups. But the number of different signs is too large and the repetitions of sequences are too rare for such a system.

The Easter Island script may be a form of pictography. It has all the requisites for picture-writing—naturalistic representations intermingled with geometrical signs suggestive of conventionalized symbols. An evolved form of pictography for the recording of chants would be possible in the general pattern of Polynesian chants, dealing with fish, birds, men, etc. Concrete ideas would lend themselves readily to graphic representation. It seems logical to suppose that the tablets were mnemonic devices for recording chants which were also memorized. The Cuna Indians of Panama and the Ojibwa of North America invented similar methods of writing. The Ojibwa memorize their chants but reproduce them on birch bark by means of signs which somewhat resemble those of Easter Island. Around each word cluster a group of words which form a stanza. Attempts to read the Easter Island tablets with the help of natives have indicated that each sign corresponds to a number of words. If the Easter Island tablets are pictographies, it is curious that the symbols are so highly conventionalized and that their number seems to be more or less fixed.

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212 Pictographies generally have more variety and richness in the choice of figures and symbols. It is unlikely that all the inscriptions dealt with the same subject, as the monotonous repetition of symbols seems to indicate. The signs always cover the piece of wood on which they are carved; this is particularly striking in the tablet, the Oar, where the signs entirely cover both faces of a European object. The wood used for the tablets was selected casually, and no attempt was made to shape it. The furrows for the signs were carved before the signs were incised. It is not possible that the *rongorongo* knew in advance that a chant would fit the tablet. The "text" was adapted to the tablet and not the tablet to the "text."

The length of a tablet and the number of signs indicate that a tablet does not represent one special chant. Though Polynesian *rongorongo* were capable of chanting throughout an entire night without interruption, they recited many chants in succession, or made a single chant long by tedious enumeration—for instance, of the anatomical features of a god or of a hero. If the long tablets represent several chants, where did one stop and another begin? Though there is much to indicate a primitive pictography the hypothesis must not be accepted unreservedly.

There is no doubt that the signs had symbolic value and that they were not purely decorative. An unshaped piece of wood did not call for decoration as did the carved objects. The few signs whose value is known clearly refer to a god (Makemake) and to a magical symbol (the vulva), connected with particular aspects of the religious cult. Birds treated in exactly the same style as those on the tablets are carved on rocks, especially in caves and at Orongo where the ceremonies dedicated to Makemake were held. All the traditions and all the statements of the natives agree that the tablets were associated with memorized chants. It is the nature of this association which is unknown and which forms the nucleus of the problem. There is no reason why Easter Island priests needed mnemonic devices which were unnecessary to priests of other Polynesian islands. No system can be disentangled from an analysis of the signs, and, as tradition was suddenly interrupted, any solution of the problem is hypothetical. Taking into consideration all the data and the several possible explanations of the tablets, I propose the following tentative explanation of the tablets.

The tablets were originally staves (*kohau*) used by the *rongorongo* men to beat the measure when chanting. They were decorated with carvings that became associated with chants. The symbols formed a sort of pictography in the sense that each glyph was associated with a particular sentence or group of words in a chant. The symbols did not correspond exactly to a specific chant, but each tablet could be used with many chants and several sentences were linked with each image. Since the connection between the chant and the tablet was rather loose, the signs became conventionalized and traditional.

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This is what Routledge's informant meant when he said that "the words were new, but the letters were old." The magical or ornamental character of the signs superseded their pictographic value. If the symbols were originally carved on a wooden stick the boustrophedon character of the "writing" would be easily understood.

Similarly, among the Ojibwa and the Cuna Indians the symbols are used specifically to increase the sacredness and the power of the words. That certain of the Easter Island signs had magic value is evidenced by their use on sacred skulls and on rocks in a sacred place. There must be a psychological link between representations of symbols on wooden tablets and on the other objects.

I am perfectly aware of the hypothetical character of my theory, but this hypothesis will serve until it is demonstrated that the ordinance of the signs on the tablets corresponds to a real system.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER POLYNESIAN MNEMONIC DEVICES

The main difficulty in solving the problem of the tablets lies in the lack of any convincing parallel in Polynesia. The Maori had notched staves (*whaka-papa-rakai*) that were displayed when reciting genealogies, each notch corresponding to an ancestor. However, these staves were not mnemonic devices but merely accessories that materialized the long series of ancestors to the eyes of the audience.

The closest parallels to the Easter Island tablets are the mnemonic devices of the Marquesans which consist of a cylindrical bundle woven of coconut fiber with knotted cords hanging from it. The bundle is often shaped like a human figure and is supposed to contain the story of the gods. Some bundles represent genealogies, each knot corresponding to a man or a woman. Others were used in connection with chants and tales. The bundles were sacred objects belonging to the priests. They were given to children at a feast where they recited chants and genealogies. Without the bundles, the genealogical lists had no value. (For a further discussion of Marquesan mnemonic devices, see Von den Steinen, Die Marquesaner und ihre Kunst, Bd. 2, Berlin, 1928.)

There is a remote possibility that chants were also represented by knots in the Cook Islands. In the Tuamotus and the Society Islands chants were embodied in material objects: sticks, plaited pandanus, or coconut leaves. After each chant, the priest deposited on the marae the object that represented the chant.

These examples show that in other islands mnemonic devices developed into sacred accessories associated with chanting that had only a remote link with their original function.

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FIGURE 58.—Signs on tablet Aruku-kurenga.

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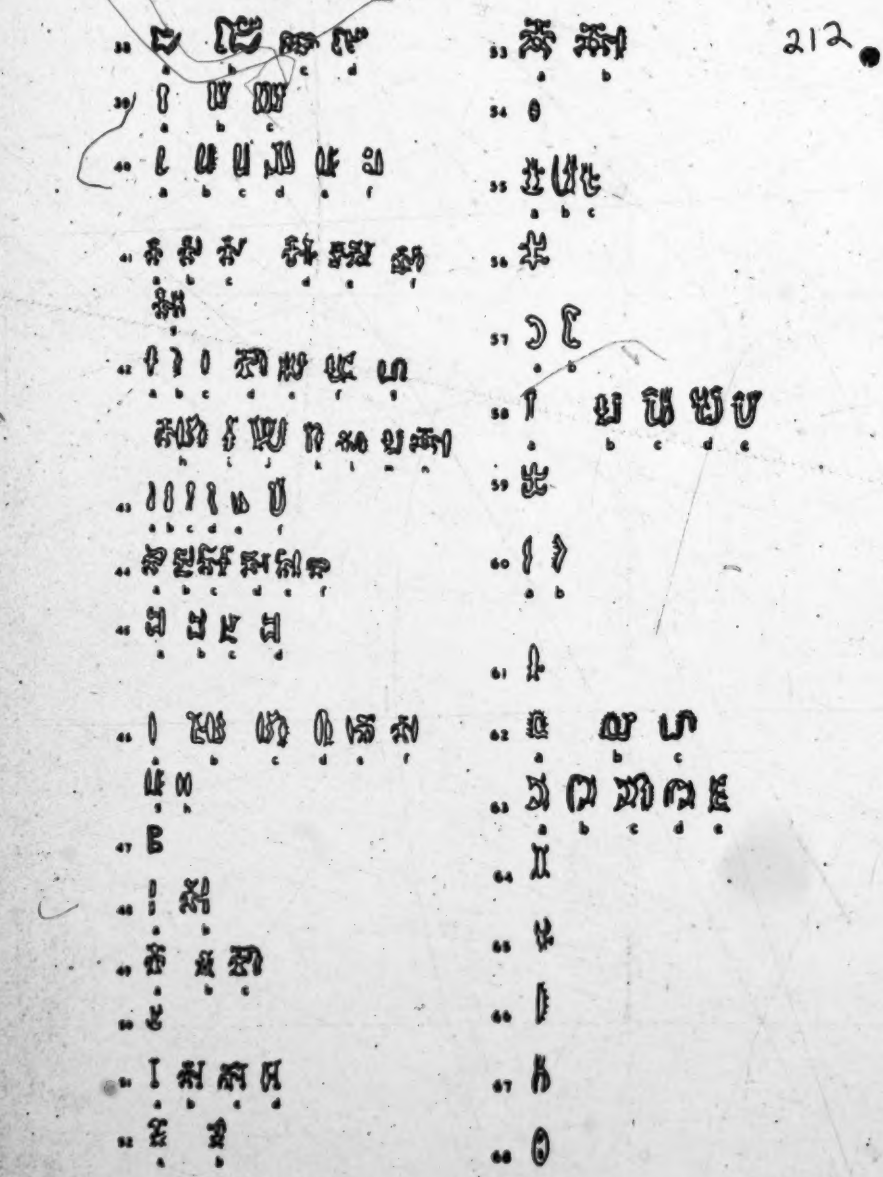

FIGURE 58.—Signs on tablet Aruku-kurenga (Continued).

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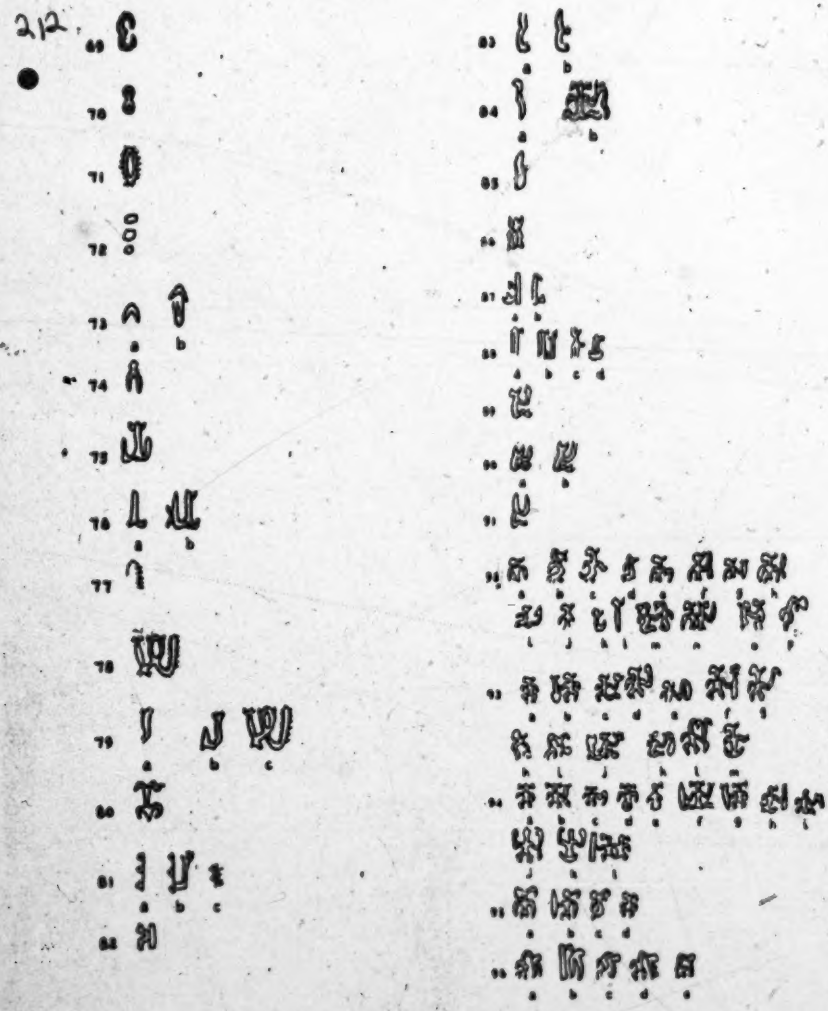

FIGURE 58.—Signs on tablet Aruku-kurenga (Continued).

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A Hungarian linguist, Mr. de Hevesy, has supposedly found striking similarities between the Easter Island symbols and a script recently discovered in the Indus Valley at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. This theory, accepted by many, needs a thorough revision and an analytic study such as the one I attempted in a special article (154).

Table 5. Symbols used on the Tablet Aruku-kurenga: Analytical List of the Signs[28]

1. Symbol characterized by triangle with two hornlike appendages. Appears 14 times: as head of human figure (6), isolated in rows V, IX, XII (3), combined with other figures (5). Two combinations: in some symbols the triangle is part of symbol and forms a head on a body as in *b-c*; combination in others possibly accidental, or may be independent.

2. Symbol isolated, appears 23 times: in row V (5); *b-d* are variants or morphologically close to symbol *f* *b* in rows VII, XV, XVI (3); *c-d* in rows III, VI (2).

3. One of the most common symbols, occurs 20 times: combined as in *b* (12); as in *c* (1); as in *d* (1).

4. Occurs 17 times: most lozenges have human ear on one side; rarely combined as in *c* and *d*.

5. Symbol simple but rare, isolated (6): *b* and *c* probable variants.

6. Symbol represents vulva, not restricted to tablets but carved on rocks and boulders: occurs on tablet (10); connected with adjacent symbol (1), but as same group appears divided farther on, we may assume combination is casual in row I.

7. Numerous variants of symbol, outline of a large sea animal, probably a whale. Appears 16 times, never reproduced identically. Form *g* illustrates how signs were modified by fancy of artist; carver added a hand to one fin of *b* (3) with no apparent purpose to form *g*. Body of animal has been interpreted as human leg, distorted outline of whale's body and fins suggesting appearance of two limbs to carver. Sometimes body of whale terminates in appendage at lower limbs as in *c*; sometimes combined as in *h* and *i* (2). Forms *j-l* seem to be related to *i*, though this cannot be ascertained; occurs 5 times: combined (4); isolated in row XI (1).

8. Symbol common on other tablets, appears here only 4 times combined in row XXII (*b*).

9. Symbol appears twice in row V: isolated (1), combined with hand (1).

10. Occurs 7 times.

11. Symbol closely related morphologically to preceding one: appears 7 times, never combined.

12. Occurs twice: isolated (1), combined with bird-man (1).

13. Occurs 15 times: concentrated chiefly in row IX (8) and row XIII (4); enclosed in oval in *d* (1).

14. Symbol interpreted by Metoro as sun or fire. Occurs isolated 14 times: combined into single symbol *c-d*; connected with fish, bird, or crescent *f-h*.

15. Appears once in row VI.

16. Insect or sea animal: sign *a* occurs in line V (2); *b* isolated in row VII.

17. Isolated fish occurs 23 times: fish held by frigate bird, *e* (4), by tern (1), by human figure, *f* (12).

[28] Bold-faced arabic numerals correspond to numbered rows on figure 58 and italic lower-case letters refer to lettered parts on the same figure. Roman numerals correspond to order of rows as given by Jaussen. Row I is at the base of the convex side and along the longest edge of the tablet. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of times a sign is found on the tablet.

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18. Crab or crayfish: in rows VII and VIII (3).
19. Appears isolated 8 times, combined as in *b* (2).
20. Occurs 3 times (rows I, II); *c*, row XVII.
21. Appears 4 times as in *a* and *b*. Reversed position in *c-e* (6). In rows IX and XIII this symbol has symbol 13 on each side.
22. Represents hand: isolated (5); combined into single sign with fruit, *b* (9); next to bird-man with open hand in rows IX, XI, XII, XIII; combined in sign *c* (1), in *d* (3), in *e* (1), in *f* and *g* (2), in *h* (3); *i* is isolated; *j* occurs in rows XV and XVI; *k* (5); *l* (1); *m* (2).
23. Appears twice in row II, preceding sign of hand.
24. Probably conventionalized adz: appears isolated (14), concentrated in rows IV-VI. Occurs in row VI (11), combined with human figures and bird-men (8). Total: 22 times.
25. Appears 12 times.
26. Occurs as single sign (½), as compound sign *b* (1).
27. Appears only once.
28. Symbol has opening up 10 times, down 4 times; provided with small barbs in *c*.
29. Occurs 3 times: in row XVI (2) the two sides are contiguous.
30. Occurs in rows XIV and XXII with hand up or down (2).
31. Two isolated figures, possible variants of same symbol.
32. Symbol formed of two ovals hanging from larger oval or from outline of fish: occurs as in *a* (3), as in *b* (2). Total 5.
33. This symbol should hardly be listed as it is carved near edge at place where symbols are reduced and simplified: occurs only once in row XVI.
34. Symbol never isolated: occurs 6 times. Combined with pectoral (*rei-miro*) (2).
35. Appears only once, row XVI.
36. Isolated symbol, row XVI.
37. Isolated symbol, row XVII.
38. Symbol represents animal whose body suggests eel, head suggests bird-man: in *a* sign is isolated, occurs as in *b* (7). Variants show clearly affinity of this animal with bird-man in symbol 92, *b*. Total: 11 times.
39. Never isolated, figures in two compound signs with symbol 1, each appearing only once.
40. Same as in 39.
41. Extraordinary personage represented 8 times.
42. Metoro interpreted this sign as yam or flower, probably banana blossom. Sign appears in form *a* (1); form *c* (5); form *b* always connected with other compound signs but usually so loosely that it may be inferred that the artist linked them with contiguous symbols for design. Sign combined with hand in *l* may form special symbol (9). Total: 25 times.
43. Five signs, rather indistinct, classed together because of resemblance, but this classification is perhaps arbitrary
44. Headless personage represented 6 times in combination.
45. Symbol never isolated but has independent meaning, as it is associated with other geometrical figures; probably a conventionalized outline of legs: form *b* (6); *b* and *d* in row XVIII, each (1).
46. Conventionalized pole: isolated (5), in combination (8).
47. Sign appears only once, row X.
48. Sign appears isolated only once, in combination *b*.
49. Design of turtle appears only twice, rows IX, XII; *c* possible variant of same symbol.
50. Occurs only once.
51. Represents plant: isolated (3), combined with different figures in *b*, *c*, *d* (6).
52. Occurs in rows VIII, XVIII, and XIX (3).

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53. Conventionalized turtle (7).
54. Sign appears only twice.
55. Occurs 4 times, in combination (1).
56. Represents lizard; occurs only twice.
57. Two variants of same symbol.
58. Occurs 4 times, never isolated.
59. Occurs 3 times.
60. Appears without barbs (2), with barbs (4).
61. Isolated symbol in row XII.
62. Isolated, occurs 3 times; combined with bird-head (2), with fruit (1).
63. Sign represents pectoral (*rei-miro*): occurs isolated (4), combined (4), duplicated as in *c* (1).
64. Occurs in combination in row XII (1).
65. Symbol isolated, perhaps reduced as consequence of its position in corner.
66. Symbol occurs in row XII (3), in row XXI (2).
67. Occurs in row XII (2).
68. Isolated, in row XIX.
69. Occurs in rows XIX and XXI (2).
70. Isolated in row XXI.
71. Symbol supposed to represent headdress (*hau*): in row II (7), in row XXII (2). Total: 9 times.
72. Series of circles, usually in groups of three but sometimes of two, one of the most common signs (27).
73. Occurs 4 times: placed above sign representing vulva (3), upon symbol 74 (1).
74. Occurs twice.
75. Compound symbol whose elements cannot be dissociated.
76. Appears isolated on other tablets, occurs here only once, as compound.
77. One of the most frequent signs, appears 41 times, usually connected with contiguous sign.
78. Compound sign, occurs only once.
79. Element occurs in different compound signs, never isolated.
80. Isolated sign.
81. Sign appears in only 2 combinations, *b* and *c*.
82. Occurs 3 times.
83. Represents leg, occurs 8 times.
84. Occurs only 3 times, always in combination.
85. Isolated in row VII.
86. Isolated sign, probably combined.
87. Two isolated signs occurring in same row IV at short interval.
88. Symbol and its compound occur 10 times.
89. Bird-man represented in same posture as on petroglyphs and at Orongo (34).
90. Outline of figure same as preceding symbol; beak and head are same also but head suggests sea animal on symbol 92, *b*, (14).
91. Another figure in same position (3).
92-93. Symbol represents bird, probably tern (*manu-tara*); occurs 149 times. The god Makemake was incarnated in this bird, hence motif most frequently carved on rocks or painted on slabs. It is difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between representation of this bird as an animal and as a human being with bird-head.
94. Next to bird-man motif this human figure is the most frequently carved on tablet; occurs 94 times.
95. Represents frigate bird; variations few, all indicated in list; occurs 32 times.
96. Represents a species of pelican. Occurs 10 times.

3:Drapkin D-5 (1934-1935) 1935
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showing the number of individuals with mixed blood, but second place, immediately following the Tahitian, in the table of percentages. This apparent contradiction is explained by the recent influx of Chilean blood, which tends to increase, while Tahitian, German, French and other older strains have a tendency to diminish, so that the proportions of these elements are rather low.

CIVIL REGISTRATION

The great freedom which prevails in sexual relations does not prevent frequent legal marriages. As a general rule, the natives marry young and a celibate over 30 years of age is an exception. In numerous instances widowed persons remarry, especially if still young, and there are widows who have had three or four husbands (Catalina Tori Makotahia, for example).

Therefore, even if one considers as celibates all the young people over 13 years, the percentage of married people remains always greater.

	Individuals	Percent
Married	112	46.66
Celibates	94	38.74
Widowed persons	34	14.60
Total	240	100.00

ILLEGITIMATE AND LEGITIMATE CHILDREN

From 1915 to 1917, following the creation of a government register at Easter Island, almost all the unions which had been given religious consecration were legalized and at the same time the greater number of the children legitimized. That is why we shall consider as illegitimate those children who were born out of wedlock after 1917 and those who were not recognized at that time.

Even with these reservations the number of illegitimate children is fairly high. It amounts to 96, which constitutes 21 percent of the total population.

ILLITERACY

Public instruction in Easter Island until the past year was the most rudimentary. Long periods of no schooling at all alternated with more or less accidental sessions of class work. It was not until 1934 that a public school was organized, always dependent upon the

3:Drapkin D-5 (1934-1935) 1935
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[177] Provincial Director of Public Instruction, Valparaiso. It is entirely
212 due to these circumstances that there is a large number of illiterates among the Easter Islanders, in spite of their remarkable intelligence and their extremely keen desire for education.

153 Easter Islanders, in the manner of most of the Polynesians, are of an open, observing nature, having extraordinary faculties for
[177] assimilation. They are constantly on the watch for every new bit of knowledge and adopt with a veritable passion every innovation, material or intellectual. Individuals of exceptional talent should have special advantages. Their present condition does not favor them at all in this respect.

191 Because Easter Island belongs to Chile, the official language is
177 Spanish, naturally. Up to the present the Chilean influence consists
[648] only of the presence of a Commissioner whose functions include those of Civil Registration Officer and Schoolmaster. Therefore it is not surprising that most of the natives, if they understand Spanish, do not speak it except very badly. Only a small group of individuals are capable of more or less correct expression in this language. The women are even more conservative in their language and traditions; there are few who can carry on a conversation in Spanish.

212 We shall consider as illiterate all natives who do not read or write any language, for quite a number among them read and write the Easter Island language or Tahitian. Without counting the children under 10, of whom there are 183, there are actually 147 illiterates, that is to say 53.85 percent. One hundred and twenty-six, or 46.15 percent, read and write.

VITAL STATISTICS

114 It would be necessary, in order to complete this brief contribu-
163 tion to the demography of Easter Island, to give statistics for births,
165 mortality, marriage, sanitary conditions, etc. Unfortunately, various circumstances have made this task impossible. The bureau of civil registry, installed at Hanga Roa in 1915, has been neglected. Also no official census of the population has been made until now. In addition, the island is without doctors who could have studied the sanitary conditions and the causes of death. To complete the difficulty, one series of the records of the civil registry has disappeared.

4:Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1945
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had fallen, again emphasized their enigmatic relation to the lost civilization, of which the statues and great stone mausoleums as well as other finely wrought remains of the past were mute evidence.

Then scientists began to study Easter Island. At what time and by what manner of men, they asked, were these images made, with their colossal bulk, their empty eyes and scornful expressions? Was the island the remnant of a sunken continent? Had it been inhabited by a powerful earlier race which had died out, or been destroyed and displaced by more warlike conquerors? Had eruptions of the volcanoes exterminated the skilled craftsmen, the sculptors, and the architects, leaving only a small group of people too discouraged and weak to continue the work of their forefathers? These are among the questions that still puzzle students.

The statues symbolize the mystery of the island and have made it famous. Yet their paradoxical presence on this speck of land in the midst of the Pacific is perhaps less difficult to understand than are the wooden tablets covered with small incised designs that were collected from the natives in the second half of the last century. The tablets raised the fascinating question whether their makers used on them a kind of hieroglyphic script which might some day be deciphered and would unveil the secret of its past. But all attempts to decipher them, with the help of intelligent natives, failed.

A few years ago the study of the tablets took an unexpected turn. A Hungarian linguist, Guillaume de Hevesy, published a long list of Easter Island hieroglyphs which, it was claimed, presented very striking analogies with the symbols of a newly discovered script found in the ruins of a civilization, 5,000 years old, in the Indus Valley at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. There, coetaneous with the Sumerian civilization, flourished large and opulent cities inhabited by people whose name and affiliations are totally unknown to us. They were wiped out probably at the time of the Aryan, and their existence remained unsuspected until the great excavations of Sir John Marshall. The Mohenjo-daro people have left a great many inscriptions on seals which have so far resisted any attempt at decipherment. If it could be shown that the two scripts were related, new light might be thrown on the obscure past of the whole Pacific area.

The problem thus posed was of such significance for an understanding of the early history of man that the French Government in association with the Belgian Government decided to organize an expedition to Easter Island to try to read its riddle. The leader of the expedition was a French archeologist, Charles Watelin, who, unfortunately, died in Tierra del Fuego. I was then asked to carry on the research, in association with the Belgian archeologist, Dr. Henry Lavachery.

4:Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1945
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mulberry, which the natives grew in special stone-enclosed plots. Perhaps the wood necessary for making sledges on which the statues might have been hauled was lumber that floated ashore. This is frequently mentioned in ancient tales. If native timber or driftwood was available in the old days, the difficulties of transportation would not have been overwhelming. We know that other Polynesians transported objects quite as heavy as the Easter Island images. For instance in the Marquesas, slabs weighing as much as 10 tons were hauled along the slopes of the mountains. The famous doorway, or trilithon, of Tonga, which is one of the marvels of the world, has a lintel weighing 30 tons. But when the Easter Islanders of today are asked about the means by which the statues were transported, they only say: "King Tuu-ko-ihu, the great magician, used to move them with the words of his mouth."

Other questions have arisen about the Easter Island carvings. How, for instance, did the people get the manpower for such large enterprises, which would have been impossible, it seems, if the population were as small as it is today? The answer is that before the Europeans arrived, the island had ten times as many inhabitants as it now has—4 or 5 thousand would be a conservative estimate. We know this from data given by its first European visitors and the early missionaries.

Again, are these statues as old as has been said? Certain writers have dated them as far back as 1000 B. C. There are even some who think that they might have been in existence 10,000 years ago. But the weight of general evidence is against these views. Although their material is a relatively soft stone, they still retain sharp outlines, and the hammer marks are still noticeable on them. As the winds blow with relentless force over the island, and rains are both frequent and violent, if the carving had been done thousands of years ago, it could not be in such good condition as it is today. Tradition seems to indicate that the Polynesian ancestors of the present inhabitants came to the island and settled it in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A. D. All things considered, I do not think the statues can be more than five or six centuries old. But no definite date can be set for them.

The figures of stone that stood so high above the shores of Easter Island, and in such striking formation that it is no wonder they amazed the old navigators, have attracted more attention than the other mysterious objects to which I have already referred—the wooden tablets with rows of strange signs incised on them. But these curious pieces of wood have also given rise to much speculation. They were bought from the natives by the missionaries in the early days of their work, and ever since they have been thought to contain a real script which, if it could be read, would prove a key to the island's mysteries.

The first white man to discover the tablets was Monseigneur Jaussen, French Bishop of Tahiti, in 1866. As he was looking at a piece of

4:Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1945
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wood, wrapped around with strands of hair, which a missionary had brought from Easter Island as a gift from the natives to the head of their new church, he was puzzled by the rows of small designs he noticed on it. These he took to be hieroglyphs, and his view has been shared by all the later students of the problem. The so-called "hieroglyphs," cut in the wood with a shark's tooth, are realistic or conventionalized drawings of various subjects, including apparently geometrical figures. Many of them represent men, animals, plants, and other familiar forms reduced to their essential features with no unnecessary detail to blur the image. They run up and down the tablets in rows so arranged that when the reader arrives at the bottom of one row, he has to turn the tablet upside down to see the designs of the next one in a normal position. These images, or characters, are among the masterpieces of primitive graphic art that have come down to us. They are outlined with an exquisite grace. The symbols are uniform in style suggesting an established and highly developed aesthetic tradition.

Unfortunately, the discovery of this remarkable work was not followed up by scientific inquiries at a time when they might have borne fruit. When, finally, in 1914 Mrs. Katherine Routledge, the distinguished English anthropologist, tried to obtain a key to its meaning from the last native who had been trained in the old chanters' school, it was already too late. He died of leprosy a few days after his first interview with her. The modern natives know nothing of the matter. They tell merely vague tales of the tablets, saying that they are magical objects which have the power to cause death.

The supposed substance of the rows of designs on some of the tablets was dictated in the Easter Island dialect to Jaussen by a native named Metoro. But when Metoro's words were translated it appeared that they were only a simple description of the designs, not their actual content, as had been hoped.

Other attempts at interpretation have been undertaken but with even less success. The most serious was that of an American naval officer, W. J. Thomson. In 1886 he tried to obtain the text of what was inscribed on the tablets from an elderly native. This man undoubtedly had some knowledge of the characters, but he had become a good Christian and was afraid of jeopardizing his chances in another world by touching the tablets or even looking at their pagan symbols. In order to resist the temptation, he ran away and hid in a cave, where Thomson finally captured him. There he was "stimulated" by flattery and a few drinks to what was thought to be a revelation of these secrets of the past. At any rate, he began to chant old Polynesian hymns, which he said were the texts of the tablets. Thomson and his colleagues noticed, however, that their informant was paying no atten-

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tion to the rows of designs as he chanted and did not repeat his words when the same tablet was put into his hands a second time. He was, therefore, thought to be a fraud and was dismissed.

As I have already said, a definite clue to the enigma of this so-called "script" seemed at last to have been discovered 7 years ago, when Mr. de Hevesy pointed out a series of analogies between some of these Easter Island designs and those of an old Asiatic script found on stone and clay seals in the ruins of two forgotten cities, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, in the valley of the Indus. Now, archeologists agree in thinking that the civilization of the Indus region dates from about 3000 B. C. Its people were an unknown race that knew how to build planned cities with a complicated sewerage system. The script they used is still undeciphered, but hypotheses about it have been advanced which, if substantiated, would make it one of the earliest known forms of man's writing. Some Orientalists see striking analogies between this Mohenjo-daro script and the early Chinese hieroglyphs.

Although the relationship between Easter Island "script" and that of the Indus has been accepted widely as a demonstrated fact, I cannot help being skeptical for several reasons. The Indus civilization, contemporaneous with that of Sumeria and Egypt, was extinct by 2000 B. C. Easter Island culture died out only 80 years ago. Roughly 15,000 miles of land and sea separate the Indus Valley from the island. Between them lie India, Indonesia, and enormous wastes of water. In other respects Mohenjo-daro and Easter Island have nothing in common: the arts of the Indus, like weaving, pottery, and metal working, were unknown to the remote islanders. The proud city dwellers of Mohenjo-daro would have looked down upon the half-naked people who lived in thatched huts, and indulged in cannibalism. How could two such different and widely separated peoples have shared the same form of writing?

In order to answer this question, Mr. de Hevesy advanced the theory that the Easter Island tablets are many centuries, if not millenniums, old and were brought to Easter Island by the first immigrants. Here the evidence that remains is against him. The wood of the best and largest Easter Island tablet is that of a European oar. Besides, if Hevesy's theory were to be accepted we should have to make the difficult assumption that the Easter Islanders kept their script unchanged for more than 5,000 years. A careful analysis of the tablets and the Indus script has not borne out this theory. True, some of the signs in the Indus script have striking analogies with those of Easter Island. I am, nevertheless, still more impressed by the divergencies, and by the doubtfulness of parallels based only on a few cases which take no account of many variants of the same design.

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212 114 Moreover, there is little question, I believe, that the designs on the tablets were created by natives of Easter Island. It would be difficult to explain on any other assumption the presence among them of so many figures of animals belonging to the local fauna and of objects that are found, as far as is known, in its culture only. Mr. de Hevesy interpreted certain of the Easter Island symbols as representations of monkeys and elephants, but for these suggestions of India's jungle life he drew on his imagination.

212 In the hope of throwing some light on the mystery, I applied to several tablets an analytical method. I counted their symbols and studied their combinations to find out whether they might constitute an actual script. If the symbols represented sounds, the same signs would have been combined in the same order whenever a word was repeated. But this seldom happens. The same combinations of the same symbols recur in only a very few cases. The individual designs are repeated over and over again but apparently in haphazard order. No clue to a script came from this study.

If we might assume that the tablets contain an actual script, the question would arise whether it were pictographic or ideographic. To answer this there are not enough different symbols. Most of them are variants of about a hundred fundamental designs. On certain tablets the same signs form a high percentage of the total.

Assuming that the Easter Island tablets contained a script, I thought it likely for a long time that this was based on the same principle as the designs inscribed on birchbark by the Ojibway Indians, who record charms by means of figures which sometimes remind us of the Easter Island symbols. From the images drawn on bark, the Indian shaman reads a text which, to his mind, they represent. The Cuna Indians of Panama still use the same primitive form of writing.

But one thing made me suspicious of such an interpretation. The Easter Island tablets are pieces of wood of various odd shapes which are always covered with designs from one end to the other and on both sides. If their contents corresponded to a script text, this would mean that the artist always knew in advance just the size and shape of the piece of wood his chant would fill. As this seemed highly improbable, I was obliged to abandon this entire hypothesis and seek for some better clue to the mystery.

212 533 I found it in a link that has been kept between the tablets and the oral traditions, songs, and prayers of the Easter Islanders. The very word that the natives use for the tablets puts us on the right track. They are called *kohau rongorongo*, which means literally "orator staff"—that is, the stick, sometimes decorated with carved symbols, sometimes not—which a speaker holds in his hands while making a public address or reciting a piece of traditional lore, as if to give added significance to his words. The *rongorongo* were professional chanters

4:Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1945
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who formed a society, which existed not only on Easter Island but also on other Polynesian islands. In childhood they were taught in special schools to memorize and to recite the lore of their tribe. 212 533

Everywhere in Polynesia the chanters use such an "orator staff." Sometimes, as in New Zealand, the staffs are provided with notches, which are supposed to help in reciting genealogical tables. In the Marquesas, the chanters held, while chanting, a bundle made of string wound about with knotted ends hanging down, which was thought of as containing the substance of the chant though the connection between the words and the contents of the bundle was loose. The bundles symbolized the chants and were in consequence of paramount importance. They were solemnly given to the young people after they had been initiated into the lore of their ancestors. 212 533 171

These facts, I concluded, give us the best clue in the problem of the Easter Island tablets. To its chanters as to the chanters of other islands, the "orator staffs" were the accessories and the symbols of their function. Originally, the designs on the staffs or tablets might have been mnemonic, but later on they lost their exact significance in the minds of the natives and were looked upon merely as simple ornaments or magic symbols. It may be added that even now we can observe on Easter Island a slight relation that has been preserved between design and chant. The natives are in the habit of chanting when they make string figures or cat's cradles. This interpretation of the tablets may not contain the whole truth about them. I offer it rather as the hypothesis which best fits the facts available today, and which harmonizes also with what we know of an underlying tendency in Polynesian civilization. 212 533

But these are not all the questions that have been raised by Easter Island. Some observers have found in the well-carved and well-fitted stones of its sanctuaries likenesses and relations to the ancient remains in Peru, and to account for them have said that there must have been intercourse between these two parts of the world at some period of history. But close study has revealed that between the Peruvian and the island ruins the resemblances do not go beyond the general fact of an exact fitting of the stones. The plan and the structure of the Peruvian buildings are entirely different. In Peru the walls are all of carved stone blocks, whereas in Easter Island they consist of slabs set on edge outside with rubble behind. The only conspicuous architectural achievement of the Easter Islanders was to select the slabs and to dress their corners so that no gap would appear on the surface and impair the general appearance. This they could naturally have learned to do without crossing the Pacific in frail canoes and making the long journey inland to the site of the wonderful ruins in Peru. Moreover, these are certainly far older than the Easter Island sanctuaries. Thus it seems clear that we must 172 114 [342 333]

7: Anonymous T-5 (1770)1908
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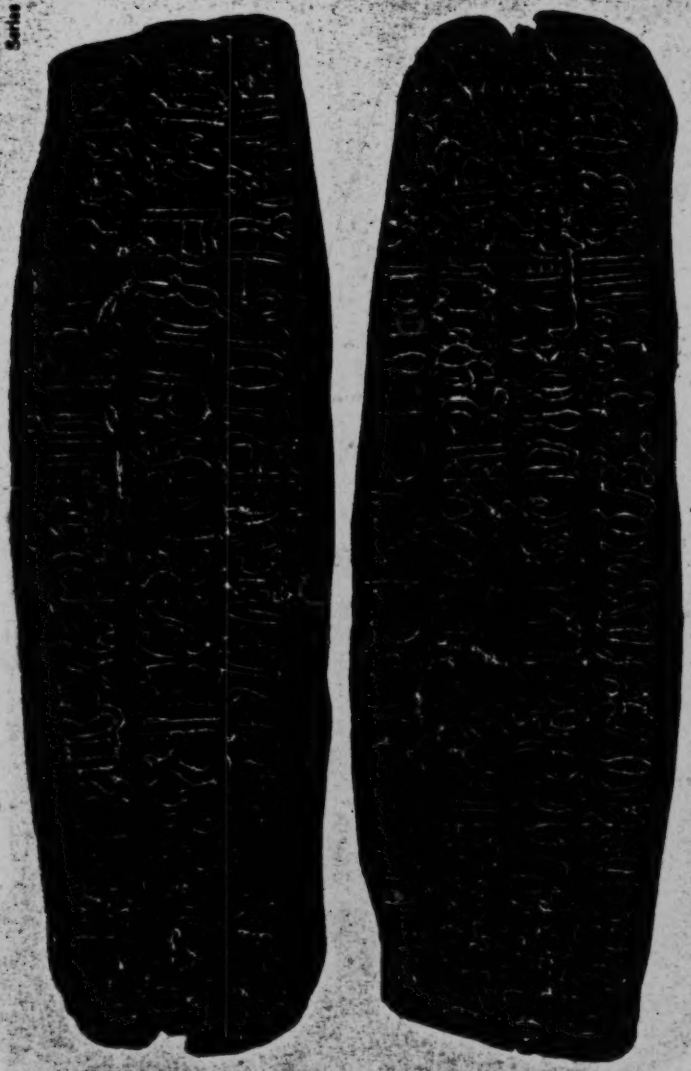

INSCRIBED TABLETS FROM EASTER ISLAND,
IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

(Reproduced for the Habitat Society by permission of the Royal Anthropological Institute)

[FACING p. 128]

11: Lavachery A-5 (1934-1935)1937
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643 174 [212] sided over the experts in *rongorongo*, the repository of ancient traditions, genealogies, etc. They used tablets (Kohau *rongorongo*) engraved with signs as an aid to memory. The signs of *rongorongo* were the object of organized teaching.

174 764 769 [115] The Pascuans practiced a form of double inhumation. The body was exposed on the *ahu* until the flesh dried up or turned to dust. The bones were then placed in the burial chambers. Sometimes the skull was preserved separately. There was a general fear of the spirits of the dead. Commemorative feasts were held in front of the tombs, where chickens were exchanged for a ritual purpose. The statues at the foot of Rano Raraku represent the dead. Several of them have tatoo marks which were still used during the historical period. Later, the images of the dead also were placed on the *ahus*.

174 776 [171] The Pascuans had a large number of gods, the chief of whom was Make Make. The same name appeared in other Polynesian mythologies. It would seem to be connected with the source of that which supplied the material needs of the Pascuans—cultivation and fishing. It was thus connected with the Marquesan Tiki, whose mask it resembled in almost every detail. Make Make is the creator of birds. One of the less obscure features of his cult is the indication, by means of birds, of a man [10] who probably represents the god, and who each spring gives place to another. Ritual feasts at which human flesh was eaten were a part of this cult, as well as also initiation ceremonies at puberty. [266]

195 179 The end of the old culture was hastened by the arrival of Europeans, who revealed a new world to the Pascuans, a world totally different from their own. From that time onward they lost without any effort both peace and the joy of life. Their restless spirit drove them to undertake the most savage warfare, which decimated them, ruined their culture and overthrew its monuments. Works of art were given up, traditions were lost, so that even the memory of their existence has perished. The whalers and slavers completed the task of destruction already well advanced. After being Christianized the Pascuans became ashamed of most of their past history, and essayed, not without success, to remove all traces of it from memory.

[10] Tangata Manu—bird man. He was the first to get possession of the first egg laid by the bird *Manutara* (breast) in the island of Motunui (spring equinox).

11: Lavachery A-5 (1934-1935)1937
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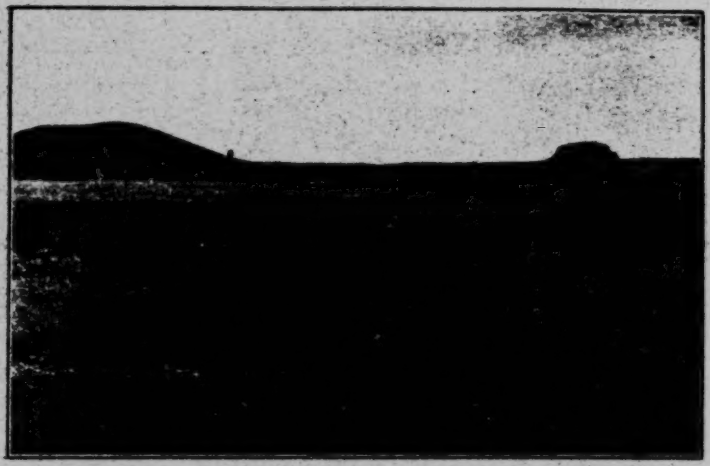

1. FALLEN STATUE ON ITS WAY TO AN AHU. RANO RARAKU, EASTER ISLAND.

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2. ROCK CARVINGS REPRESENTING THE BIRD-GOD, ORONGO, EASTER ISLAND.

[End plate 4]

14: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
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images but also small carved wooden figures. These wooden images, or some of them, are not only more recent, but they are in one sense still being made; that is to say, the tradition survives, and they are being manufactured to-day, though now only for sale to passing ships. Is there any relation between the stone images and the wooden ones? Two facts are clear, and strongly point to their being the work of the same people—they have the same length of the ear and the ring on the back; the short beard which characterizes them is also found in some three of the stone statues. On the other hand the profile differs considerably.

It has been suggested, not without strong probability, that these wooden figures are ancestral, and that their prominent ribs and sunken abdomen represent the starving condition in which the first colonists landed on Easter Island after their long voyage. The natives will not hear, however, of this solution. They are, they say, the figures of gods as they showed themselves to a certain king Tuukoihu. They were used as ornaments in certain dances, being hung over the chest and back. There is another type of the same figures, in which the ribs are not defined, which seems also to be old. The evidence regarding these might be clearer, but the natives in speaking of them give to them a large number of different names, and say they represent men, not gods. It appears probable that they were portraits, and this is borne out by the existence in the Pitt-Rivers museum of a small image with short ears of whose date and authenticity there seems to be no question, and which is said to be a portrait of Captain Cook. Another piece of evidence with regard to wooden statues exists which is even more suggestive in its bearings on stone ones. Among the most vivid memories of the old people are the feasts which used to be held in connection with certain large wooden figures called "Paina." Such a figure was made by a family who wished to honour its father, whether living or dead. It was large enough for a man to get inside, had long ears, and wore a crown of feathers. It was erected in front of an image platform, and was supported in its place by long ropes, while for three or four days feasting and dancing took place. In front of all the big image platforms can be seen holes up to four, five, or more in number in which the Paina have stood.

So far mention has been made of the problem of Easter Island as enshrined in its great images. It will be remembered, however, that there is also another mystery—its Hieroglyphic Writings. These first became known to the civilized world after the advent of the missionaries. The natives say that the missionaries told them to burn the incised tablets as works of the devil. The missionaries say that the people were burning them, and that they endeavoured to preserve them. Whichever is the truth the result is equally unfortunate, that the great majority of them have been destroyed. A few fragments scattered over the museums of Europe and America are all that remain. The late Bishop of Tahiti had a valuable collection of them, but when we reached that island (and it was one of

14: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
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the reasons for our visit) we called at his house, only to find from the present ecclesiastical authorities that on his death his Easter Island collection had been dispersed and lost.

No form of writing is known in the South Seas, and various unsatisfactory attempts have been made to decipher the signs. Here again no hope was given to us in England that it would be possible at this date to recover the art, and we found that with these as with other articles of scientific interest, the natives had too long been aware of the value of everything old to leave much chance of obtaining objects of value. Every known place had been ransacked for such things to sell to passing ships. One old man indeed was reported to have five tablets hidden in a cave, of which when he last visited it two—if I remember rightly—were found to have rotted away. We approached him with every inducement, moral and material, only to be met with a blank denial that he had any such possessions. Whether he lied or not will never be known, for he died shortly afterwards, and as is always the case in these circumstances his hoard was lost.

The pursuit of the hieroglyphics was a tantalizing one. The old people could all remember the time when they were a living part of their civilization, and had known intimately those who could make and interpret them; but even to touch them was "tabu" to the uninitiated, and with the death of the last professors, many of whom were carried away by the Peruvians, the knowledge of them expired. One old man is still alive who had begun to learn the art, but his hand had shaken so that he had given up the attempt. In most of the more important villages there had been a house set apart for their manufacture, where no women entered. Here the professors taught their pupils. They practised first on the outside stem or bark of the banana, and then were promoted to write on wood with a shark's tooth.

The tablets were of all sizes, some as much as 6 feet long, and as far as was known their contents varied; some were said to be prayers, and some a record of names. It was possible to secure a certain set of words, which was universally said to be those inscribed on the oldest and most important tablet. The natives who recited it had as much or rather as little knowledge of the meaning of the doggerel as we should have if asked to interpret some of the more mysterious of our nursery rhymes. Authority over the tablets rested in old days with the head of that section of the people known as the "Miru."

The islanders were divided into ten clans who were constantly at war, but no one of them had a chief or ariki save the Miru clan, which inhabited the northern coast. The Miru as a whole possessed certain supernatural powers. Skulls have been brought from Easter Island marked with designs whose significance was unknown. These belonged to members of the Miru clan, and as such had the invaluable property of making hens lay eggs. They were carefully set apart in consequence.

14: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
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The Ariki or chief of the Miru was not a leader in war nor the fountain of justice, nor even a priest; he was the great authority on the tablets. The last great chief "Gnaara" died about a year before the arrival of the Peruvians. He was said to be short and broad, very fair, but so heavily tattooed as to look dark. 614 622 212

At Anakena Bay on the northern coast, where tradition says the first landing took place, a great gathering was held every year. One old man, Te Haha, gave us a vivid description of the scene. He had himself been there as a boy as a sort of A.D.C. to the chief. Gnaara and his son sat on seats made of tablets. Before them in rows stood the professors of the great art, with an aisle down the centre; each man had his tablet, and was called on to read aloud. If he did not read correctly our friend Te Haha was directed by the chief to take away the offender. 173 212

What has been so far said on the subject refers to the sacred hieroglyphics only. We were fortunate enough to come across another kind of writing, of a similar nature but different both in form and intention. This was found on a paper in the village, and the signs were noted as dissimilar from those previously known. The paper was traced to a certain old man, Tomenico by name. He was suffering from incurable disease, confined to the leper colony, and of impaired memory. It was however worth while to make an effort. The first visit was a failure, but on the second and third, with a different native escort, things went better. Tomenico was seated outside his house and asked for a pencil and paper. He drew a number of signs similar to those on the paper, writing across the sheet, and then said the paper was not long enough. The line had to be continued direct; it could not go on the next line, so another sheet was supplied. Other lines went underneath it. To each symbol he then recited a set of words. There was no doubt as to the genuineness of the recitation. When he was stopped that the words might be taken down he was put out and had to begin again. It was more doubtful, however, whether the symbols had any connection with the words; they were apparently used more as the beads might be in a rosary. Two more visits were paid in the endeavour to get the system of writing, but he was then very ill and confined to his hut. Every means was tried, but little that was intelligible could be arrived at, and the effort had with deep regret to be abandoned. A fortnight later he died. Happily another old man in the village, though he had little knowledge of the hieroglyphics, had lived with Tomenico in his earlier years, and it was possible through him to get at their drift with comparative completeness and certainty. This is too long to go into on this occasion, but it may be briefly said that they dealt with minor events on the island, which were arranged in cycles of ten years. 212 126

While knowledge of the statues has almost disappeared, and detailed acquaintance with the tablets is following in its wake, there was found to have existed yet another cult, with regard to which, living memory is still strong and clear. This is the ceremony connected with the bird-cult or 794

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Between these rocks houses have been built of a pattern somewhat different from the others. These were occupied during the great function by the men who recited the tablets. The rocks themselves are covered with a symbol repeated in every size and in every position. It is a figure with the body of a man and the head of a bird. In one or more instances this figure can be traced as holding an egg in its hand. The symbol has been counted 111 times, and many more have obviously weathered away. There is no local tradition; but the inference taken in conjunction with other proofs amounts almost to a certainty that each of these represents the Bird-man of a year.

To return to the newly triumphant victor. Taking the egg in his hand he and his family danced round the coast till they came to Rano Raraku (the Image Mountain). Here the Bird-Man resided in a certain house for twelve months, during five of which he was in a state of strict tabu. The servant also became tabu and was compelled to eat food with his left hand only, the right having touched the sacred egg. The egg itself was suspended in the house of the Bird-Man till the conclusion of the year, when the new victor on his arrival took it out and buried it in a cranny of the mountain. In close proximity to the house of tabu is a roughly made ahu. Here only Bird-Men were allowed to be buried. These men were never exposed, as their corpses were considered uncanny. The bird ceremonies, now no longer held, were continued after the coming of the white men, and even after the custom of living at Orongo had been given up the first egg was still carried 12 miles across the island to the Image Mountain. While there are other possible theories, it seems to be highly probable that the statues on the mountain were the statues of Bird-Men.

The mystery of Easter Island is a puzzle of many pieces. We have, we trust, laid some additional fragments on the table to-night, and we hope in the future to put down all we hold. But others are still lacking to make the pattern clear. A large number of these must be sought outside the island itself. It is essential to know more on the general subject of Polynesian migrations, for it is improbable that either the type of image or the hieroglyphics had their origin on the island, and their earliest history must be discovered. We need to find elsewhere traces of the egg cult ceremony, or of worship of the same bird. In view of the progress yearly being made by ethnological research the general solution of the problem is probably not far distant, but it is tantalizing to realize how all knowledge of the once living detail and weird ceremonial which must have been connected with these gigantic remains is now gone for ever.

We left Easter Island in August 1915 after a total residence of sixteen and a half months. I do not propose to trouble you with the details of our homeward voyage, but you may care to hear something of our next stopping-place, the British Colony of Pitcairn Island. The inhabitants are, as is well known, the descendants of nine mutineers of H.M.S. *Bounty* who sought refuge here in 1791 with nine Tahitian women.

[see 12: Routledge for detailed description--Analyst]

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For fifty years darkness once more descends on the history of the island. Then, within a period of sixteen years, it was visited by three expeditions, Spanish, English, and French respectively. The Spanish were under the command of Gonzalez.[1] They too were searching for David's Island when, in 1770, they touched at Easter, and they also came to the conclusion that it was not their goal. They took, however, formal possession of it, and named it San Carlos. Their ships lay at anchor in the same place as had those of Roggeveen, the bay on the north coast now called after La Pérouse. From this anchorage three curious hillocks on the northern slope of the great eastern volcano form striking objects (fig. 78); on each of these they planted a cross, and proclaimed the King of Spain with banners flying, beating of drums, and artillery salutes. The natives appear to have thoroughly enjoyed the proceedings, and "confirmed them," according to the solemn statements of the Spaniards, by marking the official document with their own script. This is the first that we hear of a form of native writing. The expedition sent a boat round the island, which made a very creditable map of it.

Four years later Cook cast anchor on the west side in the bay which is known by his name. He was there three days and did not himself explore inland, but his officers did so, including the elder Forster, the botanist of the expedition, and his account of what they saw was published by his son.[2]

In 1780 La Pérouse anchored in the same place, and also sent some of his men inland, who covered partly, but not entirely, the same districts as those of Cook.[3]

As these expeditions were so nearly of the same date, their remarks may fairly be compared and contrasted with those made by Roggeveen half a century earlier. All three give very similar descriptions of the people, their appearance and dwellings, which also resemble the accounts of the Dutch. Cook is very much impressed with the long ears, though La Pérouse does not refer to them. There is the same story of the native powers of ap-

[1] *Voyage of Gonzalez*, p. 27 *seq.*

[2] *A Voyage Towards the South Pole and Round the World*, by James Cook, 1st ed., 4to, 1777, pp. 276–96.
A Voyage Round the World, George Forster, 4to, 1777. Vol. i., pp. 551–602.

[3] *Voyage de La Pérouse autour du Monde*. 4to edn., London, 1799. Vol. i., pp. 319–36.

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The ravages of this disease, following on those of smallpox, reduced the population, which at the time of the arrival of the mission had stood at twelve hundred, by about one-fourth.

The remarks of the missionaries on native customs, particularly those dealing with their ceremonies, reflect credit on the observers at a time when such things were too often thought beneath notice; they will be referred to later. Their ethnological work was, however, limited by more pressing exigencies, by the difficulties of locomotion on the island, and by the language. Roussel compiled a vocabulary, which is useful to students, though not free from the mode of thought found in a well-known missionary dictionary, which translates hansom cab into the Swahili language. It is a curious fact that so completely were the terraces now ruined that the Fathers never allude to the statues, and seem scarcely to have realised their existence; but it is through them that we first hear of the wooden tablets carved with figures. The body of professors acquainted with this art of writing perished, either in Peru or by epidemic, and this, in connection with the introduction of Christianity, led to great destruction of the existing specimens of this most interesting script. The natives said that they burnt the tablets in compliance with the orders of the missionaries, though such suggestion would hardly be needed in a country where wood is scarce; the Fathers, on the contrary, state that it was due to them that any were preserved. Some certainly were saved by their means and through the interest shown in them by Bishop Jaussen of Tahiti, while two or three found their way to museums after the natives became aware of their value; but some or all of these existing tablets are merely fragments of the original. The natives told us that an expert living on the south coast, whose house had been full of such glyphs, abandoned them at the call of the missionaries, on which a man named Niari, being of a practical mind, got hold of the discarded tablets and made a boat of them wherein he caught much fish. When the "sewing came out," he stowed the wood into a cave at an ahu near Hanga Roa, to be made later into a new vessel there. Pakarati, an islander now living, found a piece, and it was acquired by the U.S.A. ship *Mohican*.

Side by side with the establishment of the religious power the secular had come into being. The master of the ship who had

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off. So he went to Ngaara, who told him to bring ten coconuts, which he broke and put in pieces of the sacred tree, "ngau-ngau"; the spell blasted the offender, who promptly died. Ngaara himself attended the inauguration of any house of importance. The wooden lizards were put formally on each side of the entrance to the porch, and the Ariki and an ivi-atua, who "went with him like a tatane," were the first to eat in the new dwelling: only the houses with stone foundations were thus honoured. The Ariki was visited one month in the year by "all people," who brought him the plant known as pua on the end of sticks, put the pua into his house, and retired backwards.

He also held receptions on other occasions, seated on the broken-off head of an old image, which was pointed out on a grassy declivity among the hills behind Anakena; these were special occasions for criticising the tattoo. Those who were well tattooed were sent to stand on one hill slope, whilst those who were badly done were sent to another; the Ariki and men behind him laughed contemptuously at the latter (which, as the process was permanent and could not be altered, seems slightly unkind). These receptions were also attended by men who had made boats, and by twins, to whom the Ariki gave a "royal name." Such children were not, as in so many countries, considered unlucky, but it was necessary that at birth they should live in a house apart, otherwise they would not survive. This superstition still exists. Shortly before our arrival a woman in the village had given birth to twins, for whom a little grass house was put up; another woman went in and brought them out to the mother to nurse.

The Script

Closely connected with the subject of the Miru clan is that of the method of writing. While we can only catch glimpses of the image cult through the mists of antiquity, the tablets, known as "kohau-rongo-rongo,"[1] were an integral part of life on the island within the memory of men not much past middle age (fig. 98). The highest authority on them was the ariki Ngaara. It was tantalising to feel how near we were to their translation and yet how far. Te Haha had begun to learn to write, but found that his hand shook too much, besides, as he explained, Ngaara

[1] Sometimes called koho-rongo-rongo.

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FIG. 98.

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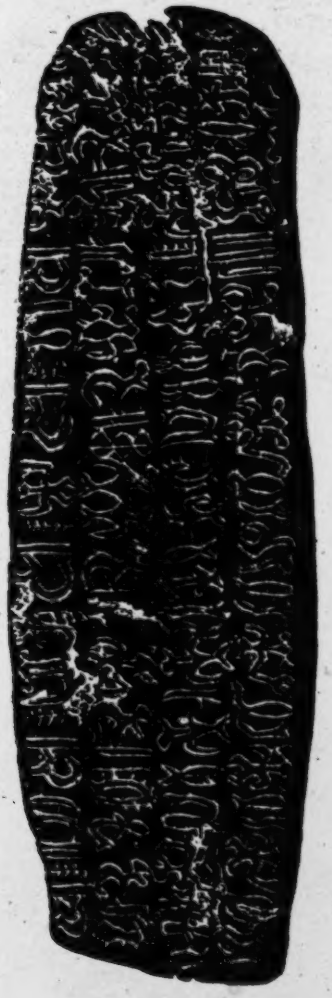

(Brit. Mus.

0 1 2

PORTION OF AN INCISED TABLET (*Kohau-rongo-rongo*).

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[facing p. 244]

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used "to send him to the chickens." Juan had had the offer of learning one form of such script, but, not unnaturally, had looked upon it with some contempt, preferring European accomplishments. The information which could be gathered was, therefore, with one exception; which will be noted later, simply that of the layman, or man in the street, who had been aware of the existence of the art and seen it going on around him, but had no personal knowledge.

The tablets were of all sizes up to 6 feet. It was a picturesque sight to see an old man pick up a piece of banana-stem, larger than himself, from among the grove in which we were talking, and stagger along with it to show what it meant to carry a tablet, though, as he explained, the sides of the tablet were flat, not round like the stem. It is said that the original symbols were brought to the island by the first-comers, and that they were on "paper," that when the paper was done, their ancestors made them from the banana plant, and when it was found that withered they resorted to wood. Every clan had professors in the art who were known as rongo-rongo men ("tangata-rongo-rongo"). They had houses apart, the sites of which are shown in various localities. Here they practised their calling, often sitting and working with their pupils in the shade of the bananas; their wives had separate establishments. In writing, the incision was made with a shark's tooth: the beginners worked on the outer sheaths of banana-stems, and later were promoted to use the wood known as "toro-miro."[1]

The glyphs are, as will be seen, so arranged that when the figures of one row are right way up, those of the one immediately below it are on their heads; thus only alternate rows can, at the same time, be seen in correct position (fig. 98). The method of reading was, according to Te Haha, to read one row from left to right, then come back reading the next from right to left, the method known as boustrophedon, from the manner in which an ox ploughs a furrow. The finished ones were wrapped in reeds and hung up in the houses. According to two independent authorities they could only be touched by the professors or their servants, and were taboo to the uninitiated, which, however, does not quite agree with other statements, nor with that of the missionaries that they were to be found in "every house." They

[1] Sophora Toromiro.

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were looked upon as prizes to be carried off in war, but they were often burnt with the houses in tribal conflict. 212

Ngaara is said to have had "hundreds of kohau" in his house, and instructed in the art, which he had learnt from his grandfather. He is described, with a vivid personal touch, as teaching the words, holding a tablet in one hand and swaying from side to side as he recited. Besides giving instruction, he inspected the candidates prepared by other professors, who were generally their own sons; he looked at their kohau and made them read, on which he either passed them, clapping if they did well, or turned them back. Their sponsors were made personally responsible. If the pupils acquitted themselves creditably, presents of kohau were made to the teachers; if the youth failed, the tablets of the instructor were taken away.

Every year there was a great gathering of rongo-rongo men at Anakena, according to Te Haha, as many as several hundreds of them came together. The younger and more energetic of the population assembled from all districts in the island to look on. They brought "heu-heu" (feathers on the top of sticks), tied pua on to them, and stuck the sticks in the ground all round the place. The inhabitants of the neighbouring districts brought offerings of food to Ngaara, that he should be able to supply the multitude, and the oven was "five yards along." The gathering was near the principal ahu, midway between the sandy shore and the background of hills. The Ariki and his son Kaimokoi sat on seats made of tablets, and each had a tablet in his hand; they wore feather hats, as did all the professors. The rongo-rongo men were arranged in rows, with an alley-way down the centre to the Ariki. Some of them had brought with them one tablet only; others as many as four. The old ones read in turn, or sometimes two together, from the places where they stood, but their tablets were not inspected. Te Haha and his comrades stood on the outskirts, and he and one other led held maru in their hands. If a young man failed, he was called up and his errors pointed out; but if an old man did not read well, Ngaara would beckon to Te Haha, who would go up to the man and take him out by the ear. [689] Our informant repeated this part of the story identically months later, and added that the Ariki would say to the culprit, "Are you not ashamed to be taken out by a child?"; the offender's hat was taken away, but the tablet was not inspected. 212 463

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The entire morning was spent in hearing one half of the men read; there was an interval at midday for a meal, after which the remainder recited, the whole performance lasting till evening. Fights occasionally ensued from people scoffing at those who failed. Ngaara would then call Te Haha's attention to it, and the boy would go up to the offenders with the maru in his hand and look at them, when they would stop and there would be no more noise. When the function was over, the Ariki stood on a platform borne by eight men and addressed the rongo-rongo men on their duties, and doing well, and gave them each a chicken. Another old man, Jotefa, gave a different account of the great assembly, by which the Ariki sat on his stoep and the old men stood before him and "prayed"; according to this version they either did not bring their tablets or their doing so was voluntary. In addition to the great day, there were minor assemblies at new moon, or the last quarter of the moon, when the rongo-rongo men came to Anakena. The Ariki walked up and down reading the tablets, while the old men stood in a body and looked on.

Ngaara used also to travel round the island, staying for a week or two in different localities with the resident experts. Another savant on the south coast was said to be "too big a man to have a school," and also went about visiting and inspecting learned establishments in the same manner.

Ngaara, before the end, fell on evil days. The Ngaure clan was in the ascendancy, and carried off the Miru as slaves; the Ariki was taken to Akahanga on the south coast with his son, Kaimokoi, and grandson, Maurata. They were there five years in captivity, and the "Miru cried much"; at the end of that time the clan united with the Tupahotu and rescued the old man. He was then ill, and died not long afterwards at Tahai, on the west coast, near Hanga Roa, while living with his daughter, who had married a Marama. For six days after his death everyone worked at making the sticks with feathers on the top (heu-heu), and they were put all round the place. He was buried in the ruined image ahu at Tahai, his body being carried on three of the tablets, and followed through a lane of spectators by the rongo-rongo men; the tablets were buried with him. His head paid the penalty of its greatness, and was subsequently stolen; its whereabouts was unknown. Ten or fifteen of his tablets were given to old men; the rest went to a servant, Pito, and

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on his death to Maurata. When Maurata went to Peru, Také, a relative of Te Haha, obtained them, and Salmon asked Te Haha to get hold of them for him. Také, however, unfortunately owed Te Haha a grudge, because when Te Haha was in Salmon's service, and consequently well off, he did not give him as many presents as his relative thought should have been forthcoming, and he consequently refused to surrender them. They were hidden in a cave whose general locality was surmised, but Také died without making known the exact site, and they could never be found. Kaimokoi's tablets were burnt in war.

The question remains what were the subjects with which the tablets dealt, and in what manner did they record them? Various attempts have been made to deal with a problem which will probably never be wholly solved. Twice before our own day native assistance has been sought to decipher them. It will be remembered that the existence of these glyphs was first reported by the missionaries; but even at that time, when volunteers were asked for who could translate them, none came forward, Bishop Jaussen, Vicaire Apostolique of Tahiti, managed to find in that island a native of Easter among those brought there to work on the Brander plantations, who was supposed to understand them, and who read them after the boustrophedon method. From the information given by him, the Bishop was satisfied that the signs represented different things, such as sun, stars, the ariki, and so forth, and has given a list of the figures and their equivalent. At the same time he held that each one was only a peg on which to hang much longer matter which was committed to memory. The other attempt to obtain a translation was that of Paymaster Thomson, of U.S.S. *Mohican*, in 1886. There was then living an old man, Ure-vae-iko by name, who was said to be the last to understand the form of writing; he declined to assist in deciphering them on the ground that his religious teachers had said it would imperil his soul. Photographs, however, were shown, and, by the aid of stimulants, he was induced to give a version of their meaning, the words of which were taken down by Salmon. It was, however, remarked that when the photographs were changed, the words proceeded just the same.

Inquiries were made by the Expedition about this old man, and it was agreed by the islanders that he had never possessed

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212 114 124 any tablets nor could he make them, but that he had been a servant of Ngaara and had learnt to repeat them. Before leaving the island we went with the old men through the five translations given by Thomson. Of three nothing was known; one which describes the process of creation was recognised as that of a kohau, but looked at a little askance, as there were Tahitian words in it. The last was laughed out of court as being merely a love-song which everyone knew.

Our own early experiences had resembled those of the Americans. Photographs of tablets, which were produced merely to elicit general information, were to our surprise promptly read, certain words being assigned to each figure; but after a great deal of trouble had been taken, in drawing the signs and writing down the particular matter, it was found that any figure did equally well. The natives were like children pretending to read and only reciting. It was noted, however, with interest, that in perhaps half a dozen cases different persons recited words approximately the same, beginning, "He timo te ako-ako, he ako-ako tena," and on inquiry it was said that they were derived from one of the earliest tablets and were generally known. It was "like the alphabet learned first"; Ure-vai-iko had stated that they were the "great old words," all others being only "little ones." To get any sort of translation was a difficult matter, to ask for it was much the same as for a stranger solemnly to inquire the meaning of some of our own old nursery rhymes, such as "Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle"—some words could be explained, others could not, the whole meaning was unknown. It seems safe, however, to assume that at least we have here the contents of one of the old tablets.

212 With regard to other kohau, a list was obtained of the subjects with which they were believed to deal. These amounted to thirteen in all, most of the names being given by several different persons. We have seen that there was a kohau of the "Ika," the murdered men; this was known to only one professor, who taught it to a pupil, and the two divided the island between them, the master taking the west and north coast to Anakena and the pupil the remainder. A connected, or possibly the same, tablet was made at the instance of the relatives of the victim and helped to secure vengeance. Certain kohau were said to be lists of wars; some dealt with ceremonies, and others

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formed part of ceremonies themselves. They were in evidence at koro, where Ngaara and the professors used to come and "pray for the father," and a woman went on to the roof of the house holding the "Kohau-o-te-puré" (prayer tablet). In another case, a woman who wished to honour her father-in-law, and at the same time secure fertility, set up a pole round which she walked holding a child and a tablet, given her by Ngaara, while he and other rongo-rongo men who brought their kohau at his order stood by and sang. 212

Perhaps the most interesting tablet was one known as the "Kohau-o-te-ranga." The story was told to us sitting on the foundation of a house on the east side of Raraku, the aspect which is not quarried. This house, it was said, had been the abode of two men, who were old when the informant was a boy, and who taught the rongo-rongo; some days ten students would come, other days fifteen. The wives and children of the old men lived in another house lower down the mountain. One of the experts, Arohio by name, was a Tupahotu, and had as a friend another member of the same clan called Kaara. Kaara was servant to the Ariki, and had been taught rongo-rongo by him, and Ngaara, trusting him entirely, gave into his care this most valuable kohau known as "ranga." It was the only one of the kind in existence, and was reported to have been brought by the first immigrants; it had the notable property of securing victory to its holders, in such a manner that they were able to get hold of the enemy for the "ranga"—that is, as captives or slaves for manual labour. Kaara, anxious to obtain the talisman for his own clan, stole the kohau and gave it to Arohio, who kept it in this house. When Ngaara asked for it, the man said that it was at Raraku, but before the Ariki could get hold of it, Arohio sent it back to Kaara, and these two thus sent it backwards and forwards to one another, lying to Ngaara when needful. The Ariki seems to have taken a somewhat feeble line, and, instead of punishing his servant, merely tried to bribe him, with the result that he never again saw his kohau. The son of Arohio sold it to one of the missionaries, and it is presumably one of those which went to Tahiti. The matters with which it would naturally have been supposed that the rongo-rongo would deal, such as genealogies, lists of ariki, or the wanderings of the people, were never mentioned. [567]

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212 124 We were fortunately just in time to come across a man who had been able to make one species of glyphs, though he was no longer, alas! in the hey-day of his powers. We were shown one day in the village a piece of paper taken from a Chilean manuscript book, on which were somewhat roughly drawn a number of signs, some of them similar to those already known, others different from any we had seen (fig. 99). They were found to have been derived from an old man known as Tomenika. He was, by report, the last man acquainted with an inferior kind of rongo-rongo known as the "tau," but was now ill and confined to the leper colony. We paid a visit to him armed with a copy of the signs, but found him inside his doorway, which it was obviously undesirable to enter, and disinclined to give help; he acknowledged the figures as his work, recited "He timo te ako-ako," and explained some of the signs as having to do with "Jesus Christ." The outlook was not promising.

212 126 Another visit, however, was paid, this time with Juan's assistance, and though the old man appeared childish, and the natives frankly said that "he had lost his memory," things went better. He was seated on a blanket outside his grass-hut, bare-legged, wearing a long coat and felt hat; he had piercing brown eyes, and in younger days must have been both good-looking and intelligent. He asked if we wanted the tau, and requested a paper and pencil. The former he put on the ground in front of him between his legs, and took hold of the pencil with his thumb above and first finger below; he made three vertical lines, first of noughts then of ticks, gave a name to each line, and proceeded to recite. There was no doubt about the genuineness of the recitation, but he gabbled fast, and when asked to go slowly so that it could be taken down, was put out and had to begin again; he obviously used the marks simply to keep count of the different phrases. At the end of the visit he offered to write something for next time. We left some paper with him, and on our return two or three days later he had drawn five lines horizontally, of which four were in the form of the glyphs, but the same figure was constantly repeated, and there were not more than a dozen different symbols in all. It was said by the escort to be "lazy writing." Tomenika complained that the paper was not "big enough," so another sheet was given, which was put by the side of the first and the lines continued in turn

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horisontally. He drew from left to right rapidly and easily. Unfortunately, it did not seem wise to touch the paper, but the writing was copied, by looking over it as he went on, with the sincere hope that his blanket did not contain too many inhabitants of some infectious variety. The recitation was partly the same as on the previous occasion, the signs taking the place of ticks; anything from three or four to ten words were said to each sign. If he made a variation when asked to repeat, it was in transposing the order of two phrases; evidently the signs themselves were not to him, now at any rate, connected with particular words.

When we subsequently went with our escort into the meaning of the words, it was found that the latter half of each phrase generally consisted of one of the lower numericals preceded by the word "tau," or year—thus, "the year four," "the year five," etc.; the numbers, roughly speaking, ran in order of sequence up to ten, recommencing with each line. The first part of the phrase was generally said to be the name of a man, but of this it was difficult to judge, as children were called after any object or place; thus "flowering grass" might be the name of a thing, or of a place, or of a man called after either the object or the locality.

Happily, one of the most reliable old men, Kapiera by name, had at one time lived with Tomenika, who was said to have been in those days always busy writing; and he was able to explain the general bearing of the tau. When a koro was made in honour of a father, an expert was called in to commemorate the old man's deeds, "how many men he had killed, how many chickens he had stolen," and a tablet was made accordingly. There was, in addition, a larger tablet containing a list of these lesser ones, and giving merely the name of each hero and the year of his koro. It would read somewhat thus, "James the year four, Charles the year five," and so forth, going up to the year ten, when the numbers began again. If there were two koro in a year, they came under the same numeral. It was this general summary which had been recited by Tomenika, and, though there was a certain amount of confusion, each line seems to have represented a decade. In addition, as will be seen, "James" and "Charles" each had a kohau of their own.

Kapiera was able to give a specimen of the lesser tau; it illus-

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FIG. 99.

TOMENIKA'S SCRIPT.

[facing p. 252]

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trates interestingly the general method of condensation in which, even in the recitations, a few words assume or implicate extended knowledge. It ran thus, "Of Kao the year nine," "Ngakurariha the eldest"; then come five men's names followed by the name of a fish; then a doubtful word; then "that side island my place." "I see Ngakurariha at the koro." The story, as explained, was that Kao, a man of Vinapu on the south coast, and Ngakurariha, his eldest son, went to Mahatua on the north side and stayed with the five men whose names are given, who were brothers, and learnt from them the tau. Having done this, they proceeded to murder them, and went and took a fish, then returned to Rano Kao, made a koro and the tau.

The tau was, it was said, originally made by an ancestor of the first immigrant chief, Hotu-matua; it was not taboo in the same way as the other rongo-rongo, and was not known to Ngaara. There were, about the beginning of last century, only three personages acquainted with it. One was Omatohi, a Tupahotu, whose son, Tea-a-tea, was Tomenika's foster-father and instructor in the art. It was said by Tomenika himself and by others that he "only knew part," and there were other signs with which he was not acquainted, for his foster-father had died before he knew all.

A great effort was subsequently made to get further information from Tomenika, more particularly as to the exact method of writing, but he was back in his hut very ill, and all conversation had once more to be done through the doorway. Every way that could be thought of was tried to elicit information, but without real success. He did draw two fresh symbols, saying first they were "new" and then "old," and stating they represented the man who gave the koro, but "there was no sign meaning a man." "He did not know that for ariki, the old men did," "the words were new, but the letters were old," "each line represented a koro." An attempt to get him to reproduce any tau made by himself was a failure. The answers, on the whole, were so wandering and contradictory, that after a second visit under those conditions, making five in all, the prospect of getting anything further of material value did not seem sufficient to justify the risks to others, however slight. As the last interview drew to a close, I left the hut for a moment, and leant against the wall outside, racking my brains to see if there was any

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question left unasked, any possible way of getting at the information; but most of what the old man knew he had forgotten, and what he dimly remembered he was incapable of explaining. I made one more futile effort, then bade him good-bye and turned away. It was late afternoon on a day of unusual calm, everything in the lonely spot was perfectly still, the sea lay below like a sheet of glass, the sun as a globe of fire was nearing the horison, while close at hand lay the old man gradually sinking, and carrying in his tired brain the last remnants of a once-prized knowledge. In a fortnight he was dead.

No detailed systematic study of the tablets has as yet been possible from the point of view of the Expedition, but it seems at present probable that the system was one of memory, and that the signs were simply aids to recollection, or for keeping count like the beads of a rosary. To what extent the figures were used at will, or how far each was associated with a definite idea it is impossible to say. Possibly there was no unvarying method; certain ones may conveniently have been kept for an ever-recurrent factor, as the host in the tau, and in well-known documents, such as "he timo te ako-ako," they would doubtless be reproduced in orthodox succession. But in the tablets which we possess the same figures are continually repeated, and the fact that equivalents were always having to be found for new names, as in that of the fish-man, or ika, suggest that they may have been largely selected by the expert haphazard from a known number. As Tomenika said, "the words were new, but the letters were old," or to quote Kapiera to the same effect, they were "the same picture, but other words." It will be noted how few men are reported to have known each variety of rongo-rongo, and that while Ngaara looked at the tablets of the boys, apparently to see if they were properly cut, it was in the recitation only of the older men that accuracy was insisted on. The names which Bishop Jaussen's informant assigned to some five hundred figures may or may not be accurate, but whether the native or anyone else could have stated what the signs conveyed is another matter. It is easy to give the term for a knot in a pocket-handkerchief, but no one save the owner can say whether he wishes to remember to pay his life insurance or the date of a tea-party.

In trying to enter into the state of society and of mind which

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evolved the tablets there are two points worth noticing. Firstly, the Islanders are distinctly clever with their hands and fond of representing forms. Setting aside the large images, the carving of the small wooden ones is very good, and the accuracy of the tablet designs is wonderful. Then they have real enjoyment in reciting categories of words; for example, in recounting folk-tales, opportunity was always gleefully taken of any mention of feasting to go through the whole of the food products of the island. In the same way, if a hero went from one locality to another, the name of every place *en route* would be rolled out without any further object than the mere pleasure of giving a string of names. This form of recitation appears to affect them æsthetically, and the mere continuation of sound to be a pleasure. Given, therefore, that it was desired to remember lists of words, whether categories of names or correct forms of prayer, the repetition would be a labour of love, and to draw figures as aids to recollection would be very natural.

Nevertheless, the signs themselves have no doubt a history, which as such, even apart from interpretation, may prove to be signposts in our search for the origin of this mysterious people.

The Bird Cult

Knowledge of the tablets was confined to a few, and formed a comparatively small element of life in the island; the whole of social existence revolved round the bird cult, and it was the last of the old order to pass away. The main object of the cult was to obtain the first egg of a certain migratory sea-bird, and the rites were connected with the western headland, Rano Kao. Little has yet been said of this volcano, but, from the scenic point of view, it is the most striking portion of the island. Its height is 1,300 feet, and it possesses a crater two-thirds of a mile across, at the bottom of which is a lake largely covered with weeds and plant-life. On the eastward, or landward face, the mountain, as already explained, slopes downward with a smooth and grassy incline, and the other three sides have been worn by the waves into cliffs over 1,000 feet in height. On the outermost side the sea has nearly forced its way into the crater itself; and the ocean is now divided from the lake at this point by only a narrow edge, along which it would be possible but

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met with an almost embarrassing response, eighty-six being quoted straight away; some of these may be the official names of bird-men and not represent a year, but they probably do so in most cases; chronological sequence was achieved with fair certainty for eleven years prior to the final celebration at Orongo. In addition to the bird-name, the names of both winner and hopu were ascertained, with those of their respective clans.

FIG. 113. Porotu acted as a hopu. He refused to be photographed, and the sketch was surreptitiously made, whilst obtaining the account of his official experiences. He also assisted in carrying the remains of Ko Tori (p. 225).

TAKÉ AND MANU

Two other ceremonies were mentioned in connection with Orongo and Motu Nui, but to obtain detailed information was very difficult. It finally transpired that of "také" no first-hand knowledge existed, as the rites had been abandoned thirty years before the coming of the missionaries. All that can be safely said is that those concerned went into retreat on Motu Nui, living, it was stated, in the cave where the hopu awaited the birds; the period was generally given as three months. A vigorous discussion took place on the subject between Viriamo and Jotefa, the oldest man in the village, seated on a log in the garden of the old lady. She was positive, in agreement with other authorities, that také was for children—"the boys and girls went in a canoe to the island"; he firmly adhered to the statement that his father went for také, after he, the son, was born. Tomenika stated that

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take formed the subject of one of the tablets, and drew one of its figures, which bears no resemblance to any other known symbol. [212]

The details of manu were more satisfactory. It was known as "te manu mo te poki," or, "the bird for the child," and the child so initiated became a "poki-manu," or "bird-child." It could not be found that any special benefit resulted from it, but a child whose parents had not performed the ceremony, and whose love affairs, for instance, went wrong, might even kill his father in revenge for the omission. An expert, known as "tangata-tapa-manu," (the man who, as Dr. Marett would tell us, "knew the right things to say," was called in and given a hen's egg—on this last point much stress was laid; he was at the same time told the child's name, which was subsequently inserted in the ritual. The child was shaved, decorated with white bands, and hung round with coconuts, or, as these were not readily obtainable in Easter Island, with pieces of wood carved to represent them called "tahonga." A number of children, each with an expert, then went up to Orongo; the correct month was December, and the Ao were therefore below at Mataveri. Jotefa, on whose final account I principally rely, stated that he and nine other children, with their parents, and ten tangata-tapa-manu, went to Orongo from his home on the north coast, a distance of some eleven miles; they took with them ten chickens. The party danced in front of all the houses, went to the carved rocks at the end, and, coming back, stood in a semicircle in front of the door of Taura-renga, the house of the statue, the experts being behind and all singing; no offering was made to the image. Another authority stated that the parents and children went on the roof of the house, the experts being below, and the parents gave chickens to the men. Jotefa's party returned to their home, had a feast, and gave more food to the professionals. The tangata-tapa-manu subsequently repeated the ritual at any koro which were being held in the island, the object apparently being to make public the child's initiation.

If, by reason of the state of the island, it was not possible to go to Orongo, the ceremony could take place at any of the big ahu with images. Viriamo, whose home, as will be remembered, was near Raraku, said with much pride that she was a "poki-manu"; she and her three younger sisters had been taken at the same time to the ahu of Orohié. Both parents